

VOLUME EIGHT • NUMBER ONE • SPRING 1987

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

**The Jesuit Educational
Center for Human Development**

Educating Integrated Persons



Communication Through Symbols



Leaving and Rejoining the Church

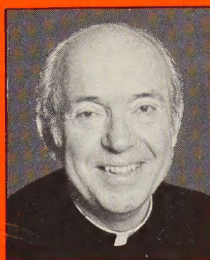


Mishandled Religious Experience



The Art of Spiritual Direction

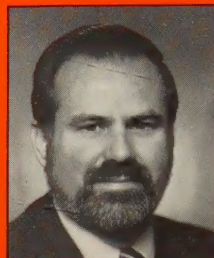
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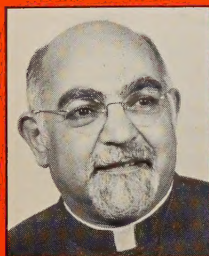
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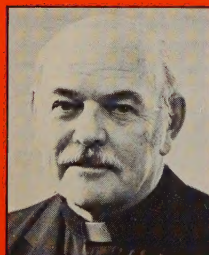
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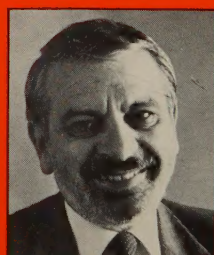
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Authors are responsible for the completeness and accuracy of proper names in both text and bibliography. Acknowledgments must be given when substantial material is quoted from other publications. Provide names of author(s), title of article, title of journal or book, volume number, page(s), month and year, and publisher's permission to use material.

Illustrations, if any, should be submitted as high-quality, glossy, unmounted black-and-white photographic prints. Do not send original artwork.

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Book reviews, which should not exceed 600 words in length, should be sent to the Book Review Editor, Jon O'Brien, S.J., D.O., Jesuit Community, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. 20057.

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EDITORIAL

SHARING OF WISDOM FROM EXPERIENCE

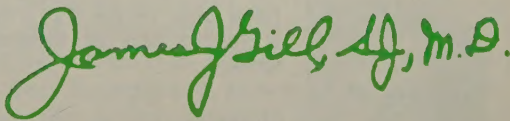
If you have been reading HUMAN DEVELOPMENT for at least a year or so, you have doubtless noticed that we often ask our readers to send us manuscripts reporting whatever they have learned from their attempts to help others to develop to the fullness of maturity. We firmly believe that through trial and error, and with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, women and men in a position to influence the lives of others not infrequently discover new and better ways of stimulating and sustaining the personal growth of those in their care. We want this journal to be an increasingly useful instrument for sharing globally the knowledge that is being gleaned from both planned experimentation and experiences that are undergone with profit even by accident.

I would like to cite an example from medicine. A few years ago, as a result of studies done by epidemiologists, physicians came to realize that antidepressant medications were enabling seven out of ten patients taking them to eliminate successfully the symptoms that were afflicting them. Three out of every ten of the persons using these drugs, however, derived no benefit from them. (That's a multitude of suffering individuals, you will realize, if you keep in mind the fact that one in every five persons experiences significant depressive symptoms during the course of their life.) Fortunately, several doctors found that by giving these nonresponders a small amount of either thyroid hormone or lithium, in addition to the antidepressant medication, they were able to boost their success rate from 70 percent to as high as 95 percent. Physicians and patients throughout the entire world have benefitted from this discovery because the doctors who made it were professional and generous enough to publish their findings in a medical journal that distributed the good news worldwide.

There must be countless analogous examples of ways that people are being helped to grow psychologically, socially, spiritually, and morally through

the imaginative efforts of others. I was thinking along this line during Lent, when I reflected on the fact that in some parts of the world specific Lenten penances are prescribed by local bishops, whereas in other areas emphasis is placed on the performance of charitable works. The church everywhere encourages its members to contemplate the suffering and death of Christ as a sign of God's love and mercy toward us. For some Christians, if they spend enough time meditating on the meaning, necessity, and gratuity of their redemption, their souls are saturated with feelings of intense gratitude and love. Many others, however, need to add some penitential acts to their contemplation, in order to move their heart successfully to a deep appreciation and affection for God. We need written contributions from spiritual directors to clarify for us, as a result of their experience, what kind of persons ought to adopt what kinds and what amount of penitential practices to complement their meditation, if growth in the form of intensified love and good works is to ensue. We also need to learn more about the spiritual benefits that people have derived from such things as music, flowers, laughter, and friendship. This is the type of information we would hope our future authors would share with our readers all over the world, who might immensely benefit from such contributions.

To each of our readers our editorial staff extends its sincere wishes that joy and hopefulness fill your heart during this season of our Lord's Resurrection. May it be for us all a time of profound and prolonged contemplation of the infinite mercy God has shown to us, and of seeking to discover the concrete ways we can—to express our gratitude—be more helpful than ever to those in our care who want to become fully developed and alive, just as he wants them, and all of us, to be.

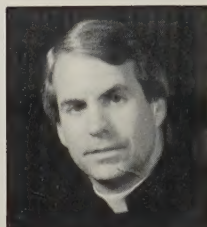


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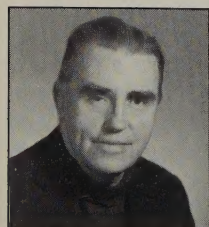
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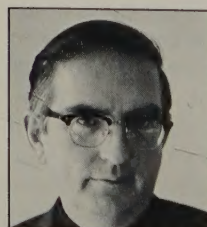
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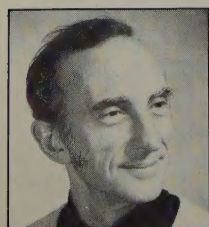
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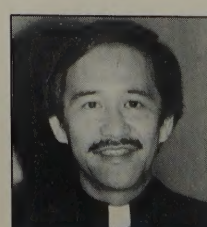
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Response on Asceticism

Thanks for John Futrell's "Asceticism Today" (Spring 1986). For me at times it is important to take a stand on an issue that involves risking loss of approval of significant persons. At other times there is personal opportunity to offer some new service, and the risk has been to discover new talents and limitations. At still other times, the effort is to find the courage to try and try again to find a solution for some current problem.

Efforts to grow toward God sometimes bring sleepless nights, misunderstanding, separation from friends, awareness of personal limitations. But making the positive choices and accepting some painful consequences is asceticism for me now.

Jane Fuller, O.S.U.
Kansas City, Missouri

Asceticism of Time

"The concrete forms of our asceticism must be discerned within any given situation. I must look first at the actual evidence. . . ." These words of John Futrell and the invitation to reflect on our personal experience of asceticism today confirm within me my need for the asceticism of time.

I share not only from my own experience but also as a witness to those who have shared their time pressures with me while I was ministering to them during spiritual direction and retreat.

The gift of time is a reality that can be accepted in one's life only when one first accepts personally the spiritual truth that a provident God continues to care for creation and that Jesus continues to redeem us as Savior and Lord of the living. If these two elements of our faith are not personally experienced in our ongoing relationship with God, time becomes a brutal, harsh, and demanding reality of daily living. This reality often leads one to anxiety and frustration and, at worst, causes a stress level that ends in dysfunc-

tional use of hours and a sense of failure in building up the kingdom of God, because one cannot even "control" one's time.

The American ethic of work/productivity, plus the Pelagianism found within us, can deny the faith experience of a woman like Judith (8:9-18), who asks how we can challenge God to fulfill our request to save the people in five days, or five hours, or five months. "My ways are not your ways, my thoughts are above your thoughts" (Is 55:9). And so is my time schedule often not Yours.

The daily need to live and serve fully in the work hours of the day and to be free enough to save some time for communion with the Lord of one's heart, the daily need for the sharing of life with community (religious, married, family, civic, etc.) and time for valid, honest, physical and psychological care of one's self, is a task in today's world that, I believe, calls for the greatest of asceticism and deepest of faith experiences. I am not the Principle of Creation nor the Savior of humankind, and often I must "let go" of the time factors that assume that I am!

With prayerful discernment, in truth and charity, and with justice, I must learn to say "No" when I need No, and "Yes" when I need Yes, for the furthering of God's Kingdom on Earth and within my own person.

Sister Colette Rhoney, O.S.F.
Buffalo, New York

I would like to suggest, at the author's invitation, a few of my own forms of asceticism that, hopefully, are helping me grow in holiness.

In the daily run of life, we have high points, and we have lows. Accepting the lows, the disappointments, the sickness and pain, the hurts and discouragements, and persevering in faith and humility of heart, can be a trial that makes us truly authentic religious. This acceptance, however, an asceticism of the inner life, is only possible if we have already embraced the spirit of self-denial.

On the other hand, though acceptance of events

is important, our lives are often very uneventful, very ordinary. Reflecting on the life of Christ, the Gospels present so much of his public ministry that we often overlook his first thirty years, the hidden life in Nazareth. Many saints and mystics lived such a life, and through fidelity to grace, perseverance, forgetting self, and living for others, they discovered the secret of transforming union with God. The signs of their times could not have been that different from our own. Asceticism will always be relevant in the church, even as the Cross will always be integral to Christianity. For those who believe and accept this mystery in their lives, asceticism means peace, growth, fulfillment, and a life rooted in Christ.

Sister Edmund Marie, C.S.J.
Reading, Pennsylvania

Agreement about Vocations

How true it is that we have to make our image as religious more attractive, as you said in "Why So Few Vocations?" (Spring 1986). Is that not asceticism? Thanks for applauding enthusiasm and perfection in one's work. I was beginning to wonder if I was wandering down the wrong path, but HUMAN DEVELOPMENT was there to reassure me.

Sister Raphael Sharkey, M.S.C.
Po Mhlatuze
Swaziland, South Africa

Hooray for "Why So Few Vocations?" Right on. There is one more thing I'd like to add, however: some of the dinner conversation in our convent is *appalling*! The Sisters watch and discuss Dallas, Falcon Crest, Dynasty, etc. Or who is being operated on, or who is dying, or who is being divorced for the

third time. Television is at the center of the community room. Evening office takes ten or fifteen minutes at most and is followed by news and more television. And *that* is what a guest for dinner hears.

There *are* good women—mostly overworked, underappreciated, and unaffirmed. They have survived many changes, but almost never is God a topic of conversation; "sharing faith" is simply not done. Psychology is definitely not valued, except for serious mental disorders, and most do not have a spiritual director. But, oh my, do they WORK. And their work is the means by which they get their value.

I'm not going to sign this. I'd be insane to do so. But I've been in long enough to experience three convents, and it's not much different in any of them.

Appropriate Physician Needed

It appears the staff here at St. Luke Health Ministries is on a common journey with those at the Jesuit Educational Center for Human Development. The mission of St. Luke Health Ministries is to witness to the healing presence of Christ. Our call is to facilitate the renewal of healing within the church, realizing God calls each of us to wholeness. As an ecumenical group of Christian health, education, and counselling professionals, we have established a community health ministry dedicated to an integrated approach to the healing of body, mind, and spirit.

Presently, we are seeking to add another family physician or internist to our staff. Finding a physician who affirms our commitment or ministry is not always easy; we would thankfully ask, if your readers become aware of such a person, that they direct them our way.

Jonathan E. Bishop, M.D.
Baltimore, Maryland

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(signed) James J. Gill, S.J., M.D., Editor-in-Chief

COMMUNICATING THROUGH SYMBOLS

GERALD A. ARBUCKLE, S.M., Ph.D.

The poet W. H. Auden pinpoints a fundamental fact of human living:

What we have not named
or beheld as a symbol
escapes our notice. (*I am not a Camera*)

We swim in a symbolic world like fish who never need to be taught how. Symbols are as important to us as water is to fish. When we become investigative analysts of symbols, however—the fishermen rather than the fish—a precise description of the nature and process of symbolic action too easily escapes through the holes in the net.

Despite this difficulty, educators and evangelizers must help people become more sensitive to the power and complexity of symbols in communication. Mary Douglas, an anthropological expert in the study of symbols, complains that there “is a sad disjunction between the recognized needs of clergy, teachers, religious, and writers and the needs of those they preach, teach, and write for.” This disjunction is due to their lack of appreciation of the role of symbols in communication. This article is a cultural anthropologist’s attempt to define the nature and role of symbols in human living.

SYMBOLS FORM CULTURE

A symbol is any reality that by its very dynamism or power leads to (i.e., makes one think about, imagine, get into contact with, or reach out to) another deeper (and often mysterious) reality through a sharing in the dynamism that the symbol itself offers

(and not by merely verbal or additional explanations). Clusters of symbols form a culture, and culture gives us meaning or a sense of direction that prevents us from falling into that which we most dread, chaos and confusion. Symbols relate primarily to the hearts of people, to their imagination. While not denying the role of logical or conceptual knowledge, the real key that unlocks the door to reveal the power of symbols is the imagination.

A symbol is not merely a sign, for a sign only points to the signified. Symbols re-present the signified. They carry meaning in themselves that permits them to articulate the signified rather than merely announce it. The stop sign at the end of the street used to be just a sign. It indicated that I must stop. This week it became a symbol. In an accident I hit it, so now every time I see it I relive the accident.

The consequence of symbolic activity, therefore, is the achievement of emotionally experienced meaning. Symbols must speak for themselves. If people try to explain the meanings of this or that symbol, they eventually prevent us from personally experiencing the meanings emotionally. The symbols become just signs. Parishioners once complained to a pastor about his efforts always to explain the liturgy: “We are tired of the explanations. They are longer than the liturgies. Just let the liturgies speak for themselves.”

QUALITIES OF SYMBOLS

Anthropologist Victor Turner asserts that the power of symbol emerges out of its three basic properties: multivocality, unification of disparate refer-

ents, and polarization of meaning. Symbols are multivocal, i.e., they accumulate layer upon layer of meanings over time. The cross I wear recalls Christ crucified, but it also reminds me of the Solomon Islands where it was made and of my deceased friend to whom it once belonged. Second, a symbol has the ability to attract or absorb meanings around two semantic poles, one having affective or emotional value and the other attracting cognitive or moral norms. Between the two poles of meaning occurs an interchange of qualities. In the interaction they strengthen and enhance each other. The social norms and values gain greater force through saturation with emotion, and the basic emotions evoked by the sensory referents are ennobled through contact with social values or norms. For example, the cross I wear was worn by my friend when he died. This evokes a feeling reaction in me, but the feeling reaction is ennobled through reference to Christ. His death has meaning through Christ's death. Third, polarization indicates that a symbol can enshrine opposite meanings at precisely the same time, e.g., the cross symbolizes both the death *and* resurrection of Christ.

Symbols have a fourth property, a sense of timelessness. I do not recall the year my friend died, but his cross still re-presents for me the vivid experience of his death. Because of their affective dimension, symbols have the power to grip the allegiance of people over a long period of time. Logical attacks on symbols do not necessarily destroy them. A pastor in the Philippines logically explained to his parishioners that their devotions to the statues in the church were "superstitious and theologically unsound"; he intended to remove the statues on the following day. That night hundreds of people broke into the church to weep, mourn, and pray before the statues. The pastor misunderstood the power of symbols.

CATEGORIES OF SYMBOLS

The following are some important types of symbols:

Public/private symbols: National symbols are par excellence public, e.g., a flag, an anthem. They connote values cultivated and shared by the nation; they also represent that nation. Private symbols lack the universality of acceptance that characterize public symbols.

Sacred/profane symbols: Many cultures distinguish between the sacred and the profane; the former refers to that which is protected specifically against violation, intrusion, or defilement and which the profane should not touch with impunity. Most nations have sacred symbols or sites, e.g., the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Structural/antistructural symbols: Structural symbols are those that reflect the ordinary, everyday life

The consequence of symbolic activity is the achievement of emotionally experienced meaning

of rules or status. To facilitate the smooth running of society, people need to know the roles individuals play in interacting with one another, e.g., symbols of authority. But there are *liminal* periods, states of "betwixt and between," in which institutional roles are quite unimportant; in fact, these periods are deliberately noted for their stripping and levelling of social distinctions. Here the symbols are antistructural, that is, antiparticularistic or anti-institutional. The social structure is radically simplified to highlight key values for growth and survival of the person and society; a religious novitiate is such a period. Novices are stripped of all distinctions in order to experience brotherhood and sisterhood in Christ.

Dominant/instrumental symbols: Dominant symbols are those that obviously stand out in a social situation; they have meanings that are generally constant and consistent over time. Instrumental symbols aid the dominant symbols to realize their function. Within technological cultures, human happiness, understood in a materialistic sense, is often a dominant symbol. More and faster cars, deodorants, even bigger and more elegantly designed coffins, are instrumental symbols.

Cognitive-normative/oretic-physiological symbols: In cognitive-normative symbols the stress is more on intellectual than on experiential knowledge, e.g., "God" as a theological symbol. The oretic-physiological symbol relates more especially to experiential knowledge, e.g., the experience of God in prayer. Jesus uses both types of symbols in his teaching of the disciples. He offers them a theological analysis of his role in salvation; he then lives this analysis, e.g., through his suffering and death.

Body-control/non-body-control symbols: "The so-

cial body," writes Mary Douglas, "constrains the way the physical body is perceived. . . . The more the social situation exerts pressures on persons involved in it, the more the social demand for conformity tends to be expressed by a demand for physical control." This is reflected in a society's symbolic system. Cultures that emphasize vigorous control over the freedom of their members have strict rules also about how people should dress and physically use their bodies. In the Soviet Union, body movements that result from loose control (e.g., wild or ecstatic movement, organic processes, trances, unconventional appearance) are rigorously excluded from all government rituals and public life in general. Body movements expressing careful control and precise coordination of many people, in contrast, are highly valued and widely represented (e.g., the precisely coordinated mass military parades). In cultures where freedom of movement is a valued emphasis, however, such a stress on body control does not exist. Hence, we have the toleration within the United States of hippie cults, communes, and religious sects and movements that exhibit all kinds of ecstatic expression.

Order/nonorder symbols: People feel the need for some order both for themselves and for the conduct of social affairs. There will be some level of orderliness or pattern within all cultures. Symbols indicate this pattern and also the boundaries separating this culture from other cultures. Whatever is not ordered correctly will be considered "dirty," "polluting," even dangerous to the welfare of the culture. Whoever questions the accepted order in the culture, e.g., a prophetic person, is seen as dangerous or as a symbol of "pollution."

Binary symbols: A highly distinctive feature of contemporary Western society is the division of life into a number of separate functional sectors: home/workplace, work/leisure, white collar/blue collar, public sector/private sector, church/state. We are likely, as anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss points out, to structure our experience and life according to a system of paired opposites. The symbolic patterning of society reflects this system of pairing. Any transgression of these dichotomies can suggest disorder, danger, or pollution. Not surprisingly, therefore, unisex hairstyles and clothing disgust or anger some people within Western cultures. Boundaries are blurred.

DECODING OF SYMBOLS

Thinking symbolically is not pure reasoning. Nor is it fully conscious thought. Hence, it is difficult at times to be precise about the many meanings of symbols. It is difficult enough grasping the meanings of symbols used by oneself and by one's culture, but it is even more hazardous assigning meanings to symbols used by other cultures.

It is helpful to distinguish, from an observer's point

of view, explicit from implicit meanings of symbols. For Irish immigrants in England, the Friday abstinence had ceased generally to retain the official explicit meaning, that is, as a form of mortification. Implicitly, however, the abstinence rule had developed powerful meanings of identity. It linked immigrants to their cultural roots in Ireland and to "a glorious tradition in Rome." The sudden removal of the abstinence requirement deeply affected Irish immigrants; the English bishops were unaware of the implicit meaning of the abstinence and its powerful role in giving immigrants a sense of security and identity in what they considered a hostile land.

DERIVATION OF SYMBOLS

Symbols, with their variety of meanings, are born because they respond to the subjective needs of people and their experience of life. For example, today the color yellow in the Philippines symbolizes the nonviolent revolution against the corrupt Marcos regime. When Benigno Aquino was murdered in Manila, in 1983, he was wearing a yellow shirt. From then on an already existing powerful movement for justice among the people almost spontaneously adopted yellow as the symbol of freedom. Marcos was so threatened by the power of this color that he forbade all government workers to wear yellow clothes to work during the election campaign period.

Since the emergence of symbols acceptable to people is a complex process, educators, politicians, and people in mass media struggle to develop the art of symbol management for their particular aims. For example, the Polish communist leaders seek to legitimize their regime through a shrewd use of national symbols: the ancient national flag, the national anthem, and the historical prestige of the army as the national defender against foreign aggressors. When General Jaruzelski began his speech on radio and television announcing the imposition of martial law, he was dressed in his army uniform and he used the opening words of the national anthem. Martial law, he said, was being introduced by the army in order to save the nation. As the army had been the savior of the people in the past, so now, it was assumed, the army would again fulfill the same function. This was a subtle attempt by Jaruzelski to add a new meaning to the symbol of the army's role in history.

The process of symbol substitution or the change in the meanings of a symbol is a slow process. People's grip on meanings is slow to be released. Jesus, the educator, knew that. At certain times, he follows the functional substitution approach, that is, he accepts existing symbols but aims to purify them rather than abolish them entirely: "Do not think I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have come, not to abolish them, but to fulfill them" (Mt 5:17). It was an uphill battle, even in his efforts with his disciples and apostles. Witness the difficulties he

Possibly the most difficult lesson for the evangelizer to learn is that in-depth culture (symbol) change is a very slow process indeed

had on the road to Emmaus with two of his disciples (Lk 24:13–35).

The church, especially in its early centuries, accepted this principle of functional substitution of symbol as a normal method of evangelization. Take that magnificent, sixth-century instruction of Pope Gregory the Great to St. Augustine of Canterbury. The pope told Augustine not to destroy the pagan temples but only the idols; altars and relics of the saints were to be their substitutes. People will feel more at home with Christian worship because the familiar temples have not been destroyed.

MYTH AND RITUAL

All cultures have some forms of repeated symbolized behavior that is tied by explanatory verbalization to their fundamental way of understanding the purpose of human existence. The repeated symbolic behavior we call ritual; the explanatory verbalization is myth. A myth is a story that claims through symbolic language to reveal a fundamental truth about the world and human life. A myth provides a framework for comprehending phenomena outside ordinary experience; ritual provides a way of participating in it. Myth and ritual give the security of the familiar in the presence of the potential chaos of the unknown.

Myths and rituals exist at all levels of human living, that is, wherever people feel the need for meaning and the comfort of expressing that meaning in rituals. Thus, we have religious, national, aesthetic, family, and sporting rituals. By way of example, take Walt Disney, who recognized the power and the need for myth and ritual in his films and parks. A stroll

through the streets of Disneyland or Disneyworld offers visitors the chance to live out national and childhood myths through rituals. These streets—spotless, godly, and patriotic—are full of warmth and sometimes cloying cosiness; they are places in which the outside world, when admitted, is scaled down to safer, softer dimensions. In brief, a good example of liminality. In Frontierland one can feel and live out once more the mythic roots of the nation.

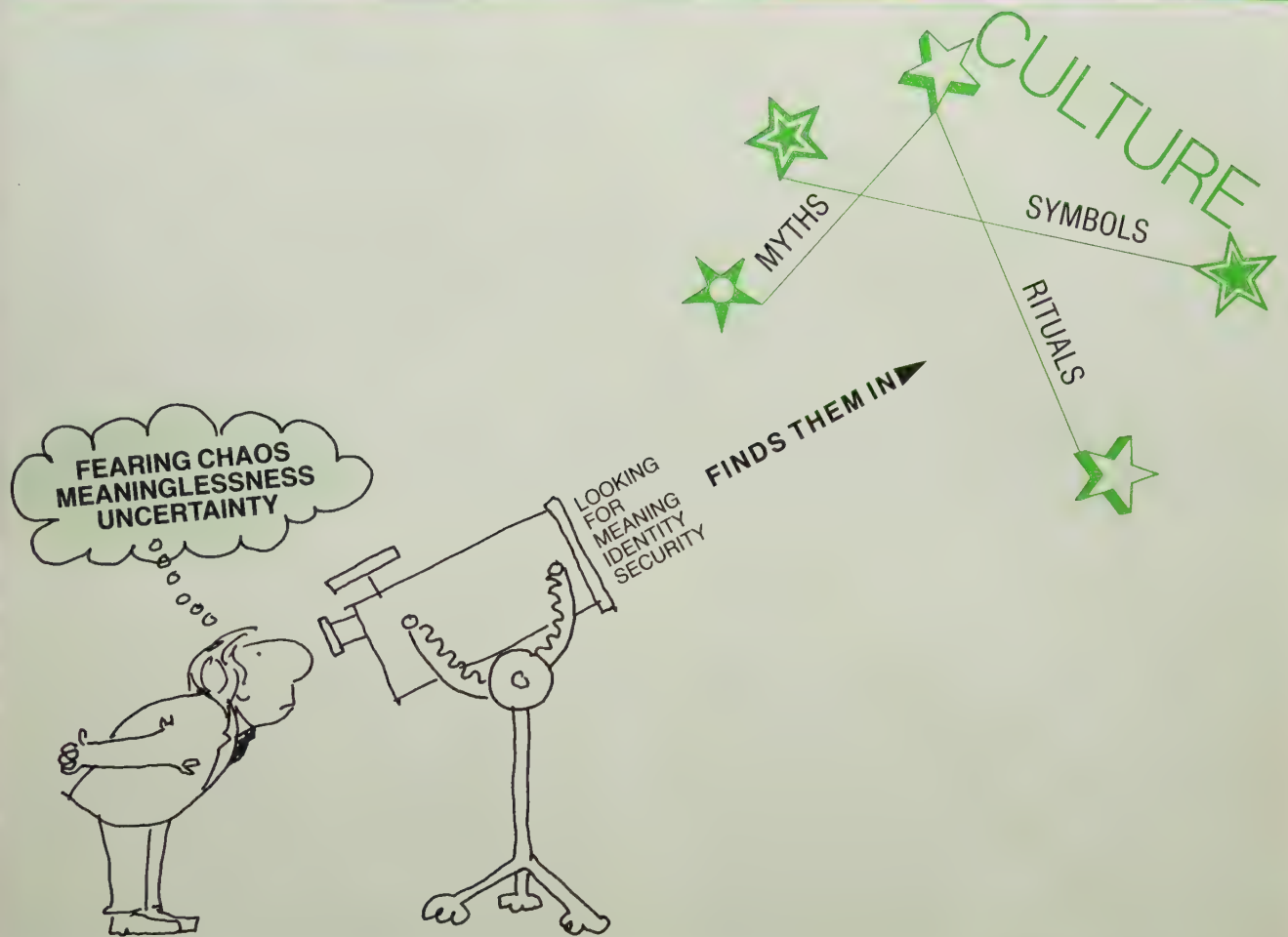
Ritual is more important in industrial or technological societies than has generally been thought. It is of central importance in our lives, whether it takes the form of prayer, respect for the national flag, participation or attendance at sporting functions, ballet, or national holidays. We discover what people consider important by the way they use rituals. No one, after observing the Fourth of July festivities in honor of the Statue of Liberty, could deny that Americans love freedom.

DISINTEGRATION OF CULTURE

Culture (i.e., symbols, myths, rituals) protects people from the awesome insecurities of chaos. Or, as sociologist Peter Berger says, culture is “an area of meaning carved out of a vast mass of meaninglessness, a small clearing of lucidity in a formless, dark, almost ominous jungle.” When a culture dramatically disintegrates, therefore, people experience the darkness of meaninglessness, a crushing taste of chaos. Cultural breakdown or disintegration occurs in one of three main ways:

1. *Normative breakdown.* Here the extant order is temporarily suspended. According to definite planning, people are shorn of their normal status in order to learn how to relate as equals. This is the liminality period referred to by Victor Turner. The actual process of interrelating in the liminality period is called *communitas*. Rituals of various kinds deliberately aim to evoke this *communitas*; for example, in initiation rites (like religious novitiates), individuals are placed in situations in which they are “forced” into relating as equals. Or, in the sacrifice of the Mass, participants are reminded at the beginning of the ritual that they are to participate in the sacrifice as brothers and sisters of the Lord and as sinners—not as mayor, president, or company secretary. Key myths are ritually retold in the stage of normative liminality, e.g., at Mass the suffering/death/resurrection myth of Christ.
2. *Temporary breakdown.* Cultures can temporarily cease to provide security and meaning for various reasons. For example, people when travelling are confronted by cultures that are very different from their own. They are at a loss to know what to do. They feel confused, ill at ease. Thus we have “culture jolt” or, if the confusion is serious, “culture shock,” that is, the feeling of numbness and mal-

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aise. A similar feeling of confusion can occur when we experience life crises, e.g., the death of a loved one, or midlife crisis. The usual cultural supports do not function. These are *spontaneous* liminality experiences. One feels very vulnerable indeed. Such experiences, however, are potentially highly creative, forcing one to reflect on deeper values and aims in life. A midlife crisis, if used rightly, can lead to a second conversion. Jesus went through a liminality experience in the Garden of Gethsemane before his own death. Confronted with the suffering ahead of him, he feels abandoned by his Father and his disciples. In his darkness he turns in fear and absolute trust to the Father, from whom he draws the strength to continue his mission (Mk 14:32–42).

3. *Long-term breakdown.* Cultures can be under-

mined suddenly or over a long period of time through confrontation with more powerful cultures, for instance, when minority cultures are undermined through contact with dominant cultures. The undermining of a culture's dominant symbols may be deliberate or unplanned. England deliberately sought to undermine dominant symbols of the Irish, e.g., their language and religion. The cultural turmoil following Vatican II was not deliberately planned but was an inevitable consequence of the breakdown of traditional dominant symbols (e.g., in liturgy, in religious life).

When people feel numbness, chaos, or meaninglessness as a result of the cultural breakdown, then one or another of the following reactions can occur, each having its own distinctive set of symbols.

- *Anomie reactions*: Here, people drift into a culture of poverty, that is, where despair, lack of hope, and loss of pride in the past become a way of life or even a twisted source of identity in themselves. People feel unwanted, as if they are nonpeople. Escape into alcohol or drugs can become powerful symbols of survival. People may even deliberately assume symbols hated or distrusted by the dominant culture, e.g., gangs in the West may adopt Nazi symbols of identity. This can be a way of "getting back" at the dominant culture for what it has done to them.
- *Violence reactions*: People, angered by cultural and personal dispossession, unite in spontaneous outbursts of violence or planned revolution against people they consider to be their oppressors. Here, ideological symbols of the revolution are important, e.g., the green and black flag of the banned African National Congress, in South Africa.
- *Revitalization reactions*: People bind themselves together in movements that seek a new cultural identity. Invariably, they receive the inner strength to do so by rediscovering their cultural roots or mythology. The revitalization movements are rituals aimed at giving participants a new sense of pride and identity in the midst of a frustrating world. Eschatological symbols of a future golden age are important in such movements. Cultural prophetic leaders emerge, e.g., refounding persons in religious congregations, to articulate new visions and new strategies for action.
- *Retreatist reactions*: People retreat into fundamentalist secular or religious cults or sects that give them a sense of belonging and self-worth. Some cults romanticize an imagined former golden age; they seek to restore old symbols intact, e.g., the Lefebvre movement or the Shi'ite Iranian revolution. At some stage in the future, however, these movements must face the real world of change.

LESSONS FOR ENCULTURATORS

The process of symbolization is the most fundamental characteristic of human activity. Evangelizers or educators committed to enculturation who ignore this truth do so at cost to themselves and to their apostolates. Enculturation is the dynamic, critical interaction between the gospel and the symbols of a culture. Possibly the most difficult lesson for the evangelizer to learn is that in-depth culture (symbol) change is a very slow process indeed. Symbols carry a high emotional charge through which a people respond to threats to the same symbols as if they themselves were in jeopardy. People fear chaos, the loss of meaning, so symbols have an inherent conservative quality about them. What the head accepts, the heart can just as easily reject at the same time.

The second lesson to learn is that enculturation does not take place through theological or liturgical experts working in university libraries or parish rec-tories. People enculturate within their faith communities. Experts can only *facilitate* the process of enculturation.

Finally, the following are some hints for the evangelizer who wishes to be an effective catalyst in enculturation. He or she must realize the need to (1) experience personally the power of symbols through

- intercultural/liminal-chaos exposures; that is, suffering the embarrassment and confusion of being in a foreign culture that one does not understand;
- development of the knowledge of and respect for the poetry, art, music, mythology, and ritual of the people to be evangelized; these are the instruments that people use to articulate the "inexpressible mysteries of life";
- cultivation of creative listening, especially to the nonverbal language of a people;
- an attempt to articulate one's own faith journey and encouragement of others to do the same;
- personal and shared prayer; in prayer we discover the rich potential of our own inner chaos and our corresponding need for God;

and (2) evangelize or educate through examples

- of one's life; as binary oppositions often characterize symbolization, the evangelizer can identify with a culture by acting in ways that directly oppose the culture's non-Christian dominant symbols, e.g., if a culture exalts wealth, then the evangelizer witnesses to radical gospel poverty;
- of community gospel living; if a culture over-stresses individualism and the spirit of ruthless competitiveness, let the religious community provide the counter-culture witness of communion lived out in faith, hope, and charity;
- of the lives of the saints, the church's mythic saviors; saints show people that they can be holy and human at the same time.

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The Art of Spiritual Direction

MADELINE BIRMINGHAM, r.c., and WILLIAM J. CONNOLLY, S.J.

Human Development is privileged to present in this feature article the first publication of a chapter from the authors' forthcoming book, The Ministry of Spiritual Direction. The work describes the way spiritual direction is understood and practiced at the Center for Religious Development, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The center, along with providing direction for laity, religious, and clergy, offers an eight-month developmental program for experienced spiritual directors.

Spiritual direction" is not a self-explanatory term. In the course of Christian history, spiritual direction has had many faces. This variety has been especially evident in the last two decades. In this article we will present a description of the way the Center for Religious Development understands and practices spiritual direction, which is our center's principal occupation. Our description will focus on the experience of what actually happens when direction takes place. First we will show what spiritual direction looks like, then we will describe the process of direction as the director perceives it.

One of us, in connection with the preparation of an article for publication, was asked by an editor, "Do you have any photographs of spiritual direction?" "What would you photograph?" The reply he received was, "You would only see two people *talking*." That answer could hardly have been helpful to the editor in need of an illustration, but it accentuates a point that deserves attention as we begin to de-

scribe direction. There are no vestments, no rituals, and no formalities in spiritual direction. For the sake of clarity and brevity, we will call one of the two people conversing the directee and the other the director. But the difference between them lies in the different purposes they have in talking, not in the clothes they wear or the furnishings at their disposal. The director does not sit behind a desk, consult an array of books, or deliver homilies to a respectful listener. He or she may not even give advice. As director and directee begin their work together, they may discuss the unusually clear weather or the crowded condition of the parking lot. They look like what they are—just two people talking.

DIRECTEE TAKES INITIATIVE

Since the primary purpose of direction is the development of the directee's relationship with God, his or her desire to pray during or after an interview is never seen as incidental to the interview. It is the

natural outcome of the two people talking, always to be hoped for, but never to be achieved by stratagem. When directees pray, they do so freely, because they have decided to pray.

Do directors and directees pray together? Probably not. Most directors at our center believe that a routine of praying together at the beginning or end of meetings can interfere with the relaxed atmosphere they hope for in direction. Relatively seldom, as a result, are more than a few minutes given to prayer during direction interviews, and this short period is not a regular practice. It does occur, however, when the directee suggests it. For example, a directee might say at the end of a meeting, "I'm amazed that I've become so clear about this today. I'd like to thank God for that. Would you pray with me?" Clearly, the initiative has been taken by the directee. The director would encourage that initiative, remembering that the purpose of the direction is enhancement of the directee's prayer. The director might say something like, "I'd be glad to pray with you. Why don't we take a moment of quiet and you can begin when you're ready." The director, participating as one who is affirming and encouraging the other, might thank God for what has happened between the directee and God but would not in any way move the focus selfward.

When the director thinks the directee might like to pray, even though the latter has not raised the possibility explicitly, the director might suggest, "The past week seems to have been an important time for you. I'm delighted that you've been able to share so much with me. You may want to spend a few minutes in our prayer room before you leave or thank God sometime during the week for all that has happened. How does that sound to you?" This again leaves the decision to pray with the directee, who remains in charge of when, how, and even whether to speak to God.

SILENCE A SOLUTION

The following remarks by Tom, a typical priest-director, point up another possible difficulty about praying with directees that is worth our attention:

After several months of praying often with my directees, I discovered that I had developed a little formula for every occasion. I felt like a greeting card! When I stopped to look at what was going on, I realized that I didn't always feel like praying from my heart. I was motivated by the idea that a good spiritual director should be able to pray anytime and anywhere with his directees.

Tom went on to say that he was now trying to be more true to himself. If one of his directees wanted to pray, he suggested that they pray in silence: "I tell the person that if either of us wants to pray aloud we can go ahead and do so. That seems to work out well. A great deal of the time, I am silent. I feel freer and it seems quite satisfactory to my directees."

People's experience of prayer makes it clear that a relationship with God involves coming to know him rather than simply know about him

Related to the question of prayer together is another question that Catholics sometimes ask: Can one, or should one, receive the sacrament of reconciliation from the director when the director is a priest? Sometimes directees request the sacrament at our center, but we do not consider the sacrament an ordinary part of the process of direction. Most directees do not ask that it be administered during direction interviews.

When directees do indicate an interest or a need, we sometimes suggest making arrangements with another person on the staff. We do this because the emotional response to a "confessor" can be quite different from the response to a director and could influence the relationship with the director. Both tasks are true ministerial service. But the confessor is often perceived as a judge. He may be a merciful and compassionate person but can remain, in the eyes of the directee, the one who imposes sanctions and levies fines. He has the awesome power to forgive and the even more awesome power not to forgive. A spiritual director does not exercise this power. In fact, experience seems to have shown many directors that it is easier for directees to talk freely and reveal themselves more readily when the question of sin and forgiveness is not the paramount issue in the dialogue.

STARTING UP DIRECTION

The directee and the director usually try to bring the directee's hopes for direction into clear focus during their first meeting. The director will want to know what has prompted the directee to ask for direction. He or she might ask, after the conversation has proceeded for some time, "So the idea of direc-

tion is not new to you; you've thought about it awhile. Then this summer you decided to do something. What got you to make the decision?" Directors have more than information in mind when asking this question. They want to invite their directees to recall the event that brought them to direction and to talk about it.

No one begins direction in a vacuum. Often an external event has led the directee to start. It may have been a conversation with a friend, an opportunity to change careers, or perhaps an illness. Whatever it was, the director hopes the directee will recall it, look at it again, and to some extent relive it. If it is significant—and usually it is—he or she is willing to join the directee in the recalling and reliving. Together they may see more of the experience than the directee alone could see. The director is particularly interested in giving the directee an opportunity to put the memory of the event into words, because this objectifying will enable the directee to contemplate the event more thoroughly and realize more keenly how it influenced him or her.

Internal events have also occurred. The external happening has affected the directee's thinking and has aroused feeling-reactions. These in turn have motivated the directee to take action. The more fully directees can contemplate the external event, the more poignantly they will be aware of the thoughts and feelings it awakened. As they contemplate these thoughts and experience these feelings again, directees will be better able to explore the desires that brought them to direction. This is a matter of considerable moment for them. Their desire will be, except for God's action, the most helpful resource available to them in pursuing what they are looking for in direction. The more fully their minds and feelings lay hold of it, and the more tangibly they grasp its strength, the more forcefully it will influence them as they approach the choices that lie before them in the early stages of direction.

DIRECTOR'S QUESTIONS ASSIST

What can the director do to help the directee explore these events? Let us begin with an example. A male directee and a female director have discussed the directee's reasons for seeking direction. Then the director asks, "Is there something that brought you to look for direction now? You've thought about it for the last year, but a month ago you made up your mind. What happened then that got you to decide?"

Directee: I had my fortieth birthday.

Director: That's an event all right. Congratulations!

Directee: Thanks. Well, birthdays always make me stop and think. This time I thought a lot. "Forty" has a pretty solemn tone to it. My life's half over. There are a lot of things I've wanted to do and haven't done. One of them is to get serious about God.

The directee has mentioned an external event: he has had his fortieth birthday. He has also experienced an interior event: the birthday has affected his thoughts and, it appears, his feelings.

Director: It sounds as though the birthday made an impression.

Directee: Like a punch in the jaw. I had heard that you give spiritual guidance here, so I looked up your number and I picked up the phone. (He pauses) But I didn't call.

Director: You decided not to?

Directee: I thought: Wait a minute! What am I getting into here? I put down the phone and waited a couple of days.

Director: You waited.

Directee: And thought. And prayed. Then I called.

The directee has spoken of interior events: his hesitation, thought, and prayer. The director can overlook the possibility of exploring them. If she does, the directee will probably say no more about them. The director can, however, say,

Director: Remember what you thought and prayed about?

Directee: I thought, well, this is a very big step. This means letting someone else hear thoughts I've never spoken aloud.

Director: Letting someone hear what you've never heard yourself. Good reason to hesitate.

Directee: I wrestled with that.

Director: You wrestled with it. Quite a match?

Directee: I didn't want to come. I thought: The director won't understand what I'm talking about, and if that happens, I probably won't know what I'm talking about either. I get tongue-tied sometimes. Especially when I'm talking about things I'm not used to talking about, things that are important to me. I kept thinking: Who needs it? Then I thought: *You* need it. After awhile I remembered something Frank told me about you people. He's the friend who told me about this place. He said his director never rushed him. He said I could always take my time. Remembering that was reassuring.

Director: You went through a lot. It was important that you be able to take your own time.

Directee: It was. I want to find the God who calls me, and not get bogged down in someone else's thoughts.

Director: To find the God who calls you.

Directee: Yes. To find him. That's why I wanted to come.

Director: You seem emphatic about that. He calls you, and you want to find him.

Directee: I don't want anything to get in the way of that.

A director will not view a directee's experience of God as he would a sighting of Halley's comet or a first glimpse of the Grand Canyon

Director: Would this be a good time to say more about him calling and your desire to find him?

Having experienced the director's willingness and ability to understand his hesitation, fear, and new assurance, the directee has now risked speaking of something still more intimate. He has begun to talk about God and about the desire to find him that underlies his request for direction. The director has shown him that she understands that he has begun to talk about God and has indicated that she is willing to talk further about God and the directee's desire for him. She has also left it to the directee to decide whether to pursue the matter further at this time. The directee may choose not to accept the director's invitation, but the director's attentiveness to the inner events he has already mentioned have given him reason to expect that she will also be attentive when he speaks further about God and himself.

Conversations like this, when we present them as role plays at workshops on spiritual direction, often elicit objections from some observers. The directee is doing all the work, they say; the director isn't doing anything. The director may rejoin that she feels tired after the conversation and believes that she has worked. It is true, however, that it is the directee, not the director, who has tried to recall the events that have provided the substance of the conversation and sought out the words to express them. It is he who will make the decision to speak further about God's relationship with him. This is no accident. It is important that it be so. No matter how telling a part the directors take in the process of direction, it is the directees who make all the major decisions. If

they do not make them, direction comes to a standstill. The efforts the directees expend in the early interviews help them develop a habit of work and a momentum that will serve them well later, both in direction itself and in prayer. Among the most useful favors directors can do for directees in the early interviews is to refuse to do the directees' work for them and to let the directees expend the effort that will enable them to develop this momentum.

LISTENING TO EXPERIENCE

The principal issue in the conversations between the directee and the director is the directee's experience. This is the case at the beginning of direction, as we have indicated, and it remains true through the course of direction. The directee's experience changes, but it remains the principal issue.

Once we have grasped the centrality of the directee's experience, we can readily understand that the director's most fundamental task is listening. It is first of all through listening that directors can help their directees to bring the experience that has persuaded them to consider direction out of the private world of their thoughts, feelings, and desires into the conversation that takes place in direction. Directees acknowledge the fundamental nature of this task when they say, as they often do about directors who are helpful to them, "He listens." They also acknowledge it when they sum up the deficiencies of directors who are not helpful, by saying, "He doesn't listen." Unless the director listens, spiritual direction cannot proceed.

"It seemed an easy job, sitting there listening," one director said as he described his first reactions to the prospect of adopting direction as his principal ministry. It does appear easy, and it is a simple service. Directees often let us know, however, that they have found it hard to come by people, even directors, who are able to provide it.

The listening that takes place when the director is performing this fundamental task is far more than the physical act of attending to words. It is participation in the directee's attempt to describe his or her experience so that directee and director can contemplate it together.

What this participation involves can be shown by an example. Phil, who comes to Jack for direction, is describing a recent experience that he believes has something to do with his relationship with God.

Phil: I was hiking alone through a forest. It was toward the end of the summer, and the foliage was very full and luxuriant. The highway and the noise of traffic were far behind me. There was no wind. The woods seemed absolutely still. It occurred to me that the forest seemed as limitless as the sea. It was all around me. Branches arched over my head and roots lay under my feet. I felt immersed in it, as you

might be immersed in the ocean. I noticed something else, too. Little by little I became aware of the profusion of living things around me. A cluster of large ferns sprouted beside the trail; a branch with maple-like leaves brushed against me; a spray of tiny blue flowers nestled against a boulder. I noticed these. But what I became most aware of was the leaves, thousands of them around me and above me, all slightly stirring. Suddenly I was astonished at the abundance of all that life. (He pauses.) I thought, I'm not alone.

Phil pauses again, and Jack says,

All that abundance and you thought, "I'm not alone."

Phil: Yes. I'm not alone. That's what I thought. I stopped and stood for a long time. I wasn't aware of the time, but I realized later it was a long time.

Jack: You stood there.

Phil: Yes. Listening.

Jack: Listening?

Phil: Listening to the silence. That's a strange thing to say, isn't it?

Jack: Say more.

Phil: It was as though the silence was full of life and was telling me something. As though something was being said that I couldn't make out. As though someone responsible for all that life was speaking.

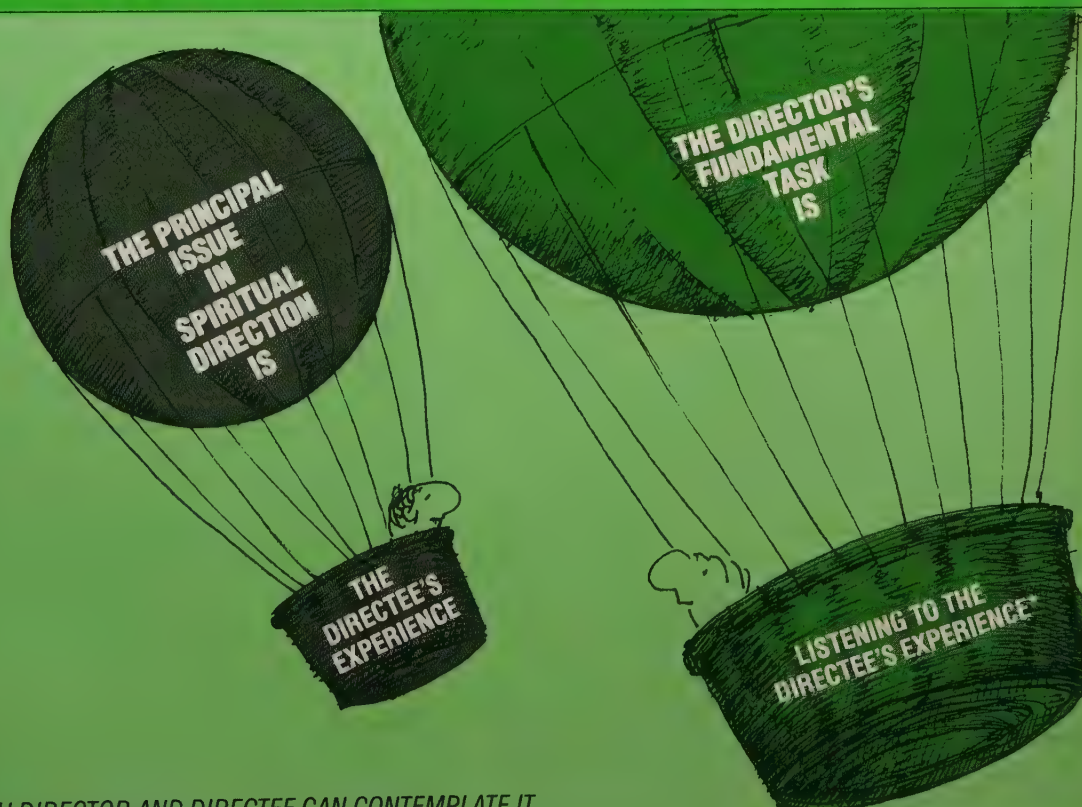
Jack: As though someone was speaking?

Phil: Yes, and telling me . . . well, after awhile it sounded as though there was care for me. As though I were a swimmer immersed in care for me.

At workshops we conduct on spiritual direction we sometimes ask, "Why doesn't Jack ask questions like, 'Do you think you could have been imagining this?' or 'Have you ever had an experience like this before?' What do you think Jack is trying to do?"

When we ask these questions of participants, someone usually answers, "You're using nondirective counseling techniques." To this, when we have

ESSENTIAL TO SPIRITUAL DIRECTION



*SO THAT BOTH DIRECTOR AND DIRECTEE CAN CONTEMPLATE IT

our wits about us, we reply, "We know what it sounds like. But what is Jack trying to do?"

If Jack asked, "Do you think you were imagining this?" or "Have you ever had an experience like this before?" he would be distracting Phil from the attention he is giving to the experience. The distraction might be only momentary, but it would still be a distraction. All the director's comments and questions are aimed at helping Phil keep his attention on the event he is describing. Phil is absorbed in the experience, and Jack is absorbed in it with him.

Jack may also be curious. He may want to know whether Phil has had experiences like this on other occasions, but he does not let his curiosity interfere with the absorption. It might be helpful to Phil to try to remember similar experiences in another interview, or later in the same conversation, but the attention he is giving to the experience now is too important to be interrupted.

CURSORY REACTION AVOIDABLE

Most of us are not accustomed to standing and looking. We are attracted by the majesty of mountain views, the swirling power of blizzards, the gradually deepening color of high clouds as sunrise approaches, and by God. But we tend to glance at them and quickly turn our attention to other objects or other concerns. We give a moment's attention, but we turn away before we can become absorbed enough in what we see to be more than superficially affected by it.

Jack does what he does because he wants to give Phil a chance to be more than superficially affected by his experience in the forest. Whether Phil returns to the memory of the experience and lets it form a basis for reflection and prayer, he has to decide for himself. Jack may ask him whether he would like to do this. But Jack has already done something that is likely to be more conducive to further reflection and prayer than a suggestion will be. By his interest in and engagement with Phil's experience, he has helped him to pay attention to it long enough to become absorbed in it again and be further influenced by it. To let the memory become a basis for prayer will be easier because this conversation took place. In fact, Phil may have begun to pray during the conversation itself.

CONTEMPLATION OF GOD

In his conversation with Phil, Jack did not try to focus Phil's attention on God. He did not focus on Phil's remark "I'm not alone," for example. Instead, he continued to let Phil describe what had happened in his own way, at his own pace, and to decide for himself what course the account would take. He also wanted Phil to choose his own emphasis and to recognize for himself what he was emphasizing. Thus, when Phil remarked a moment later that it was as

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though someone responsible for the life around him was speaking, Jack did not ask him to be more specific. He said simply, "As though someone was speaking?" Phil then mentioned that he was aware, there in the forest, that there was care for him.

Phil might pause to reflect. Realizing that someone cares for one has a different effect on a person than recognizing that there is someone within speaking distance. Phil has reason to pause.

What should Jack do now? We have come to a point in the conversation that proves to be a crux for directors. Both Jack and Phil are contemplating Phil's experience. Jack may think he knows that someone was speaking to Phil, and that the someone cared for him. Jack may not be sure, however, that Phil knows this, or if he does know it, that he is willing to admit it. Many directors would say that Jack should now "lead" Phil to the knowledge Jack already has or the admission he has already made. Jack, however, chooses not to lead Phil, but to let him come to his own knowledge and his own admission. How can Jack do this? By encouraging Phil to keep looking at this experience and what it was making known to him.

It is, after all, Phil's experience, not Jack's. Jack will do well to let Phil keep looking until he finds out for himself what the silence is telling him. For there is more than an intellectual answer at issue. If God is speaking through the silence, the issue has to do with his relationship with Phil, and that will have to be lived out, not merely thought out.

How a relationship is to be lived out has to be determined by the persons who are relating to one another. People's experience of prayer, however, makes it clear that a relationship with God involves coming to know him rather than simply know about

him. When Jack encourages Phil to pay further attention to the silence, he expects that in God's time and in Phil's, this will mean that Phil will pay attention to God as God wants to disclose himself. Jack hopes, too, that it will become a giving of attention without a practical agenda but engaged in for its own sake: to come to know God as God is intent on revealing himself in his relationship with Phil.

ATTENDING TO FEELING-REACTIONS

A director will not, therefore, view a directee's experience of God as he would a sighting of Halley's comet or a first glimpse of the Grand Canyon. What the directee perceives is important. Also important, however, is the directee's feeling-reaction to what he or she has perceived.

In the conversation between Jack and Phil the director would ask, after he and Phil had explored Phil's perception of his experience,

How did it make you feel?

Phil might reply,

Feel? What do you mean?

Jack: Were your feelings affected? Did your body tense? Did your skin get prickly?

Phil laughs: No, no. I felt good.

Jack: Good?

Phil: I felt very good.

Jack: Do you have another word for it?

Phil: Well, wait a minute. (Long pause) I felt warm. It was a kind of tender feeling, I suppose. I had forgotten that.

The purpose of these questions is not to undertake an extensive exploration of Phil's feelings and so depart from the contemplative thrust of the conversation. Jack wants Phil to pay attention now to the way he participated in the experience, to Phil's side of the relationship. He begins, not with his deliberate participation, but with his involuntary, spontaneous participation, which will show itself in his feeling-reactions.

Phil has now begun a new phase of his description. When I begin to describe my feelings I begin to describe myself, and the more specifically and concretely I describe my feelings, the more explicitly I reveal myself. I disclose myself not only to the person to whom I am talking but to myself as well. A person describing his feelings about a religious experience will often explain, "I had no idea I felt like that! It was only as I described my feelings to you that I realized what they were."

This moment of self-revelation is a delicate juncture in the conversation. The person describing his feelings may want to stop doing so now. He may disengage, for example, by resorting to general descriptives like "good," "not too bad," or "all right,"

which reveal little about his personal reactions. If this happens, the director has to decide whether to ask for a further description of his feelings or let the matter rest. His primary purpose at this point in the conversation is not to learn more about the directee's feelings, but to offer the directee the opportunity to express himself more completely to God. If he believes that the directee now knows his feelings well enough to tell God concretely what he feels, he may not pursue the subject further. He may say simply, "You don't have to say any more about your feelings to me. How do you feel, though, about saying them as completely and concretely as you can to God?" If he is in doubt about the directee's awareness, he may ask the directee whether he thinks he knows his feelings well enough to say them to God.

The decision is significant because of the consequences it is likely to have. If the directee does not express his feelings concretely to God, he is likely to find that further attempts at prayer will prove flat and lifeless. If he does express himself concretely and immediately, he may find that God will reveal himself further. The more frankly people disclose their feelings to God, the more he seems to communicate himself to them.

The first attempts to express feeling to God are a beginning. Directees' deeper feelings may come only gradually into their consciousness, so it may be weeks or months before they express them fully. In the meantime, the attention they give to letting the feelings of which they are aware come before God furthers almost imperceptibly their communication with him. The director does what he or she can by encouraging the directee to persist in quiet but sustained attention to this communication.

It will be important during this time that directees not divert their effort to communicate feeling into a self-absorbed exploration of their feelings. We easily become fascinated by such explorations and, lacking a director's help, can be drawn into them without realizing that they are distracting us from our main purpose.

The principal purpose of letting ourselves become aware of our feelings in prayer is the communication of ourselves to God. This requires, however, not only self-awareness but trust in the other person. We do not disclose our feelings, especially our deeper feelings, to those whom we do not trust to receive and accept them.

INTERACTION WITH GOD

Looking at God, and listening to him, indispensable as they are for spiritual growth, can still leave a person passive before him. To begin to interact with God, directees must lay hold of their experience of God. They do this by making up their mind to trust God as they have experienced him.

We cannot, however, force ourselves to trust. Tightening jaw muscles and gritting teeth will not

If directors are preoccupied with the moral, psychological, or social growth of their directees, they may not give the religious experience the attention it deserves

achieve trust. Before we trust another person in delicate matters we have to recognize him or her to be trustworthy. But knowing persons to be trustworthy is not the same as trusting them. Directees say "I trust God," and we sometimes know they are expressing a vague belief that he is trustworthy, not a conviction based on experience that they can count on him. Before we come to trust him in a matter that is important to us, we have to take a chance on him. Many who say "I trust God" have not yet trusted him enough, for example, to express to him their most intimate feelings—their deepest fears, their fiercest resentments, their most tremulous attachments. As a result, their relationship with him lacks spontaneity, and their prayer tends to be guarded.

A religious experience is of inestimable value in itself, apart from the moral, psychological, or social development that may follow from it. The fact that it has occurred is itself precious. It is worth remarking that if directors are preoccupied with the moral, psychological, or social growth of their directees, they may not give the religious experience the attention it deserves. If they do, what can happen?

In the conversation between Jack and Phil, after they have talked about Phil's feeling-reactions to his experience—and they would do so at greater length than we have described—Jack might ask,

Now that you've thought and talked about the incident in the forest, does anything about it stand out prominently in your mind?

Phil: It seems to me that God was doing something for me.

Jack: Doing something for you?

Phil: Going out of his way for me. Doing something special.

Jack: That's saying a lot.

Phil: I know. I feel strange saying it. I'm not used to thinking that God could go out of his way for me.

Jack: I don't know whether you want to say more about it or be quiet and ponder it. Or change the subject.

Phil: It means a lot to me. Could I be quiet with it for a minute?

Jack: Sure, take your time.

Phil, after a long pause:

I can't get over the care he seemed to be showing me. All I want to do just now is be aware of it and let it sink in.

Phil and Jack end the conversation here. They resume it the next time they meet, a week later.

Phil: I didn't have much time to pray this week. Life gets hectic at this time of the year. This week was the worst yet.

Jack: Pretty wild, eh?

Phil: It sure was.

Jack: Did you have a chance to think about what we were discussing last week?

Phil: That's what was so disappointing. I had hardly any opportunity to do that.

Jack: Did you think about it at all?

Phil: Not much.

Readers with little experience of direction may be puzzled by the contrast between Phil's diffidence at this meeting and the enthusiasm he showed at the end of the last interview. Those with more experience will find the reversal familiar. Both enthusiasm and diffidence are genuine. Both are reactions to the experience in the forest and the conversation about it. Jack, by his careful attention to Phil's freedom, has provided opportunity for both reactions to develop. He could now be daunted by Phil's hesitation and change the subject. He does not do so.

Jack: Remember what you thought when it passed through your mind?

Phil: I was glad it happened. It was a wonderful experience. But I don't know what to do with it.

Jack: Did you trust it?

Phil: Trust it? What do you mean?

Jack: Sometimes a person can doubt that he really had the experience, or wonder whether God had anything to do with it.

"Do you trust it?" With this question Jack has raised a key issue. Phil has been attracted by his experience in the forest. He has talked about it and reflected on it with enthusiasm. He may not, however, have asked himself whether he trusts it. He has

been accustomed to hearing about God and reading about him. But he experiences many perceptions every day, and many of them are moving, some of them deeply so. Most of them, however, give place quickly to newer, fresher perceptions, leaving little impression on his thought and his life. Jack knows that Phil may want to grasp his memory of the experience in the forest and not let it slip away. He may be willing to build on it by letting it be a focus for his prayer and reflection and, perhaps, in time, a basis for action. His question offers Phil the possibility of deliberately acknowledging the reality of his experience. This acknowledgement, if he is willing to make it, will provide Phil with a foundation on which he can build. "Do you trust it?" affords him an opportunity to establish that foundation.

People who are beginning to be aware of their experience of God are not usually consistent in their willingness to trust the experience enough to build on it. They are often satisfied to have had the experience. It does not occur to them that their habitual way of perceiving their relationship with God can now change and that their expectations of him can change too. They vacillate for a time between the new perception and their older, habitual perceptions of him. They may be convinced today that God has now shown himself caring for them, yet may not give themselves a chance to pray again for weeks.

This vacillation frequently occurs in another type of situation: A directee has had an experience of God showing his care for her. She is delighted by the experience. A few weeks later someone dear to the directee becomes grievously ill. The directee thinks, believes, and prays now as though the experience of God's care had never taken place. Indeed, she may forget that it did.

Any disappointment that cuts us to the quick can bring surging back into our consciousness childhood fears of a God who was then perceived as arbitrary or vindictive. We may say, and mean it, that God cares for us and that his love is unconditional. But our older, more compelling perception tells us otherwise, so we withdraw from God as we would from any arbitrary or vindictive being who has power over us. We avoid affective contact with him. We may not pray at all, except to ask perfunctorily for his help, or if we do try to pray more extensively we may recognize no feeling at all and find ourselves so harried by distractions that we can pay no attention to God. When this happens, directors will spend a significant part of their time asking, "Do you remember?"

PAST CAN ASSIST

This will not be their only task. They will listen to their directees' experience of disappointment and will explore with them their conscious feelings. They may also ask whether the disappointment and fear remind the directees of other occasions when those feelings were aroused. If they are wise, they will

avoid the extensive probing of feelings that is the proper province of psychotherapy. Their major task will be that of asking the directees whether they recall any experience that has shown God to be other than fearsome, to be instead loving and caring and inviting the directees to freedom.

When directors ask about such an experience they are not implying that the directees should view God as loving and caring *now*. The directees may not be able to do this, and guilt at being unable to do it would only be another useless burden. Directors are suggesting, however, that the directees, once they recall an experience that shows God as other than harsh and unfeeling, might decide whether they are willing to let that experience affect them too.

A person unsettled by mishaps or torn by tragedy can find it supremely difficult to let himself be absorbed again in the memory of an experience that revealed God loving him and caring for him. Grief, chagrin, and resentment are powerful emotions that can absorb our attention like quicksand, and they are especially potent when people try to quiet their minds for prayer. "When I try to quiet down, those feelings come in on me," directees will say. Often, a person who wants to engage in prayer of more than a few minutes' duration can do so only if she addresses the feelings themselves to God. This frequently permits her to become aware of God and pay attention to him. If her awareness of God is dominated by a lurking suspicion that God is harsh and arbitrary, she will find this difficult to do. The violence of her emotions will make it hard for her to listen to any suggestion that God might not be as harsh as her perceptions make him seem. If the director is patient and discreet, however, he or she can usually find opportunities to invite the directee to recall an experience of God that showed him to be other than harsh and arbitrary.

When a directee has experienced God as caring and trustworthy but is now oppressed by a more deeply entrenched impression of God as harsh and vengeful, the directee's freedom to allow God to be himself with him or her is at stake. The older impression overwhelms the memory of any newer experience that shows God to be different.

DIRECTOR A FACILITATOR

It is easy for a director to neglect his facilitative task at a time like this and take on the role of teacher. "You have to remember the experience you described to me a few weeks ago, and what it taught you" can come readily to his lips when the directee is strongly and intransigently expressing her discouragement. Only if he is doggedly convinced that he can best serve the directee by encouraging her to pay attention to God as God himself chooses to show himself can the director provide lasting help.

It may take weeks or months of weekly meetings before his patience and concern take effect. During

GENERAL RULES BASED ON EXPERIENCE

**IF THE DIRECTEE EXPRESSES
HIS/HER FEELINGS CONCRETELY
AND IMMEDIATELY TO GOD**

**GOD IS
LIKELY TO
REVEAL HIMSELF
FURTHER**

**FURTHER ATTEMPTS
AT PRAYER
MAY PROVE FLAT
AND LIFELESS**

**IF THE DIRECTEE DOES NOT
EXPRESS HIS/HER FEELINGS
DIRECTLY TO GOD**

this time he will be better able to maintain his facilitative posture if he relies more on the directee's memory than on his own and keeps inviting the directee to relive her experience of God caring as the directee herself recalls it. "I seem to remember something that happened a few months ago when you were watching a sunset," he can say. "You'll remember it better than I. Can you recall it for me?"

Another example will help make clearer the struggle a directee may have to undergo in choosing between older attitudes toward God and newer attitudes suggested by recent experience. It can also illustrate the facilitative position a director can take in assisting the directee.

Maria is a friendly, engaging woman in her middle fifties, a member of a religious congregation. She has been a schoolteacher for more than thirty years. She is a capable teacher and has a degree of enthusiasm for her work that younger teachers envy.

Until six months ago, she perceived God as basically a guardian of law and of the regulations that govern her religious congregation. Prayer had always been something of an ordeal for her. It often centered on what was expected of her, and she frequently asked God's help to accomplish what she

was "supposed to do." Sometimes, especially when she felt more than usually oppressed, she asked God what he wanted of her, but since she always thought she knew, she never waited for a reply.

At that time she had an experience in prayer that made her aware that God cared for her exactly as she is, with all the quirks that embarrass her and the pettiness she tries to hide even from herself. "But I'm as petulant and inconsistent as a six-year-old," she cried out to him. "Doesn't that matter to you?" At that moment she had a very strong sense that somehow God was letting her know that what mattered so bitterly to her did not diminish his care and affection for her.

After that incident she became increasingly able to express her deeper feelings spontaneously to him. "When I talk to him," she said to Roger, her director, "I start sentences without knowing how I'm going to finish them. It's such a delight to be that carefree with someone who loves you." She also began to find herself markedly less guarded with two of the women with whom she lived. One memorable day she overheard a student say of her, "It is such fun to hear her talk about God now!" She experienced weeks of calm and uninterrupted joy. "I never thought," she

told Roger, "that I could be this happy again."

Then, six weeks ago, her younger sister was found to have terminal cancer. Several days later, her sister's youngest son, a boy of whom Maria is especially fond, was seriously injured in an automobile accident. It is still not known whether he will regain the use of his right arm.

Maria has visited her sister and her nephew every day since they entered the hospital. She has been indefatigable in her efforts to encourage them and the other members of their family. She has prayed frequently for her sister and her nephew but has not resumed the intimate prayer in which she was engaged before her sister's illness was diagnosed. A week ago Roger asked her, "Do you think God has any interest in what has happened to you and your family?" She answered, "I don't know. He seems to be employed full-time on the moon."

Maria realizes that she is grieving and that she must expect to experience strong and diverse emotions. She and Roger have spoken of this, and she has gradually become able to express to him much of what she feels. But she remains troubled because God is so distant and seems to show so little concern for her. When Roger asks her whether she could tell God how she feels, she replies that there seems little point in doing that. After a long pause, she replies bitterly, "You say what you really feel only to someone who cares."

Roger: Do you ever look back to what God seemed like to you a couple of months ago?

Maria: Yes. It seems unreal. It has nothing to do with my life now.

Roger: I wonder whether it might be worthwhile to recall it and spend some time with it?

One director has said, of a directee's feelings in situations like this, "It is as though you have been walking together down a long, straight corridor and you turn a corner to find yourself suddenly confronted by a massive stone wall, with no door. You are keenly aware of the directee's frustration, and you yourself feel dispirited, afraid, and a little angry that your way has been so completely blocked."

Roger's feelings make him aware of some of Maria's feelings. He is also aware that despite the intransigence of her feelings, she has a choice that she can make. She can choose to keep recalling God's care for her and her spontaneous openness to God. To recognize that she has a choice does not minimize its difficulty. But she can give attention to her memory of God's care, and she will not unless she decides to do so. If she does not make this choice, the memory will remain, like most memories, unavailable to contemplation.

Making this choice is a major moment in accepting God as he has shown himself to be and allowing the dialogue with him to continue. If he remains faithful to his task of facilitation, Roger will not urge Maria

People beginning to be aware of their experience of God are not usually consistent in their willingness to trust the experience enough to build on it

to make the choice. He will, however, help her to keep the possibility of choice in mind and to remain aware that she has not made it.

REGRESSION IS POSSIBLE

Maria's indecision is an instance of a phenomenon that appears frequently through the course of spiritual life. We will call it "counter-movement" when we are referring to single occurrences and "counter-current" when we are speaking of a recurrent counter-movement. Counter-movement is an impulse, and counter-current a stream of recurrent impulses, that prompts a person to withdraw from new life. A term used in psychology to describe an analogous situation is "resistance."

In the experience we have just described, Maria has withdrawn from the memory that God has cared for her and from the nascent realization that he may be caring for her still. The experience of knowing God's care and responding to it still attracts her, but the force of the impulse to withdraw makes considering the attraction a difficult, even a herculean, task.

The painful events that have occurred in Maria's family could well give her reason to think that God is arbitrary and callous. It is the inner event, however, that betrays the presence of counter-movement. Although she has recently been convinced by her experience of him that God cares for her, she behaves now as though that event had never occurred. To consider both the painful events in her family and her experience of God caring for her and to decide that God might after all be only an uncaring

guardian of law would be regressive, but it would not be irrational. It is in her return to her old perception of God without seriously considering her recent contrary experience of him that the impulse away from God potentially reveals itself.

When directors encounter a prolonged and intense counter-movement in their directees, they can easily make the mistake of thinking the directees obtuse or perversely acquiescing in their own unfreedom. The directors can then find themselves nonplussed or angry. Yet a counter-movement is inexplicable unless it is seen as the harbinger of new life. A counter-movement counters a movement toward freedom and toward God. If directors can ally themselves with the possibility of new life and with the directees' freedom to make their own decisions, they will want to remain in vital contact with their directees as the directees hesitate. Recalling how often they themselves have resisted the approach of new life will be particularly helpful in enabling them to summon up the patience to do so. When a person deeply desires God, the defeats inflicted by counter-movement are likely to be only temporary.

The process of direction takes place on the ground of the directee's life and prayer. It changes ground as the directee's life and relationship with God change. Today the ground on which direction takes place may be the directee's desire for more interior freedom. Next week it may be his or her resentment at a loss he or she has suffered. A month from now it may be an attraction to Jesus as he appears in the Gospel account of his meeting with the widow of Naim. Two months from now it can be an attraction to Jesus' enthusiasm for the poor coupled with the directee's embarrassment when he or she is approached by beggars. Over months and years the ground changes as the directee's awareness and prayer change.

The director's basic task, however, will remain the same. It will always be the facilitation of the directee's encounter and dialogue with God. On whatever ground the dialogue with God takes place, directors will best serve their directees by helping them to become absorbed in what God is like and to candidly express to God what they experience as they stand before him.

FEAR CAN IMPEDE

When people have had little or no experience of spiritual direction, they can enter into the process with some degree of fear. One directee stated, "I was afraid that you were going to try to force me into a box, make me conform to particular standards. It took awhile before I could relax and believe that was not going to happen to me. Then I could let the fists in my stomach unclench." Such fear energizes a directee toward self-defense and siphons off the energy that could be focused on relating to God.

Fear may also result from a previous experience of

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direction. Another directee spoke of realizing that he was disappointing his director: "Doris let me know that she had expected me to be further into prayer after three months of direction. I felt as though I had robbed her of all her Christmas presents!"

Reactions such as these reinforce the need for the director to emphasize that there is no particular method to be learned and no specific goal to be reached within a given time span. We try to help directees to remain open to God's action and to increase their awareness of what God seems to be doing and saying. We invite directees to continue the struggle to pray and to allow God to keep revealing more to them.

It is up to God to work directly with the praying person—inviting, challenging, consoling, revealing, and even at times demanding reaction and response. Responding to God in this way is a task that also generates fear, but this fear is usually accompanied by attraction. It becomes the director's responsibility to encourage the directee to keep looking at and following God's leading, especially as the directee comes to recognize that there are no clear-cut rules that guarantee relationship with God.

One directee at our center revealed, "I came to the center thinking that I would get some answers, some signposts that would help me to see where God was calling me and what I ought to do. I believed that God would become crystal clear. Instead I kept finding that there were all kinds of surprises. Nothing worked the way I thought it was supposed to. As I look back now, I can see moments of joy and moments of pain. The only thing I am sure of now is that I can never be certain about what God is going to do. But God knows, and I am going to keep letting

myself be surprised, even when I don't particularly like it."

If, then, there is no method, no gauge to measure concretely either the amount or type of growth in relationship that will occur, we are entitled to ask what we can rely on. Is there anything that will indicate what is likely to happen between God and the directee?

RELATIONSHIP A DANCE

One way to look at the ongoing relationship with God, the struggle between God and the directee to continue meeting each other, is to compare it to a dance. A man reading these pages may easily recall the anxiety he felt the first time he searched a dance floor for the person he most wanted to approach. He may also remember the sweaty palms, the wild beating of his heart, as he searched for the courage to risk the coldness of refusal and to ask the woman to dance. A woman could be reminded of the apprehension she felt about not attracting a partner after hours of preparation and waiting. Her apprehension might have been immeasurably increased when she was approached by someone she did not know or someone she found unattractive. And it is not unknown, although sometimes difficult to understand, for a woman to refuse to dance with the one person for whom she feels the most attraction.

Many of these feelings and reactions are also apparent when God first approaches a directee. God stands before the person waiting for a sign of recognition, hoping for an indication of welcome and acquiescence. The dance can begin or not, depending on the response of the other. This is what we can often forget when we look at the relationship with God. God does take the initiative, but we can and do say "no" as often as we say "yes."

If there is a positive response, then the dance can begin. In our fantasies, of course, we move into a dance exactly as do Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, or Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron. There is no faltering, no testing, no mistake. But we all know that this is seldom true in the reality of life. Dancing requires learning and practice. The steps may be simple, but they are also intricate and the tricky dimension is that I not only have to learn the movement and mood of my own body but also the movement and mood of my partner's. There is dependence on the other at all times if we are to have a partnership, a common venture, a task to be shared, as well as joy. The two

people must learn to move together in harmony, with a sense of suppleness and lightness. We have two very individual people who achieve a sense of at-oneness only through work and practice.

In the dance, there are moments when the two separate and move away from each other. If the dance is to continue, the partners have to be intent on turning again toward each other, a swift looking, a refinding, then achieving grace and harmony again. If the relationship with God is to be continued, he and the directee must remain conscious of each other with all that this implies: seeking, asking again, accepting, and moving together.

This is the way it must be in the deeper relationship with God. There is continuous movement, constant searching out. There are moments of fear and anxiety, and other moments of fluid joy and supple grace. The question of who does the leading becomes purely a technical one. There is a mutuality of relationship, a desire to blend and to meld as one. The true dancer knows through experience that the secret of mutuality lies in trust, suppleness, and sensitivity to the slightest rhythmic motion of the partner. Does this say anything about the relationship we seek with God?

The first moment is one that can never be recaptured. It happens only once. Those of us who have experienced God's invitation recognize this moment for ourselves. It is that time when we finally say our "yes" with a full heart, despite our fear that we will not know the right steps, that we will not know how to follow, or indeed, not even be sure that we want to follow. But we say "yes" and the dance begins.

Until that happens we are like the people in the Samaritan village who came out to see Jesus because the sinful woman claimed to have talked to one who was more than the ordinary traveler. It was only when they made the effort to hike out to the well and experienced him talking directly to each of them that they could say, "We believe now, not because of what you have told us, but because we have seen and heard him ourselves."

In the ongoing relationship, we rely on this first experience of dancing with God, but we cannot remain there. God is constantly calling on us to learn new moods, new rhythms, new steps. If we wish to become proficient, we set ourselves to the task. The struggle, the exercise, the practice may be somewhat daunting at times, but each new dance will find us more flexible, more supple, more filled with grace. Spiritual direction can improve our dancing.

Having Home Words with Martha

JAMES TORRENS, S.J.

The invitations said
"Banquet at seven,
French food and dancing,
please, please come."
And I was going
when the committee broke,
after the roll calls,
minutes,
motions on the table,
hands,
word wrangles,
recounts,
huddles and strategies.

They sent a messenger:
"The band has struck up
and champagne is foaming,
all the guests have come.
There's quiche and sweetbreads."
That was fine with me.
But first
ah, first
a few questionnaires—
Do you approve of X?
In the hypothesis of Y
should we do Z?
Please take your time,
careful,
we count on you.

A phone call came:
"We're bolting the front doors—
freeloaders crashing!
You can get in the back,
but hurry."
Sure. O.K. Soon as
I write up the reports,
get a few letters out
postmarked no later than today,
after an interview or two,
a memo,
some few calls returned.
When I can rip this page
out of my office calendar,
I'm there.

Meanwhile, please
put a warm plate aside.

I composed the accompanying poem at a hectic moment in 1972. How much has changed since then? One guess. No, the Law of Acceleration has lost none of its prominence among the laws of nature, whereas I am still all ears for any law of deceleration. One learns about breakdown, of course, major or minor, but breakdown is hardly among the normal impulses of life or purposes of the Creator.

The reality of living at high speed these days—the famous American Way—impinges variously on one's sensibilities. I myself imagine this bit of conversation. *Question:* What did you last watch on television? *Answer:* If I remember correctly, the 1985 Superbowl. Or consider the dream a friend recently recounted. She had six visits to make in half an hour, all during peak traffic. That's when you wake up tired! My department chairman speaks of the sense of never catching up. I myself have at times an almost surreal sense of things literally flying by—furniture, friends, buildings, trees, fish—and I waving at them as they go. The implication here, of course, is nonengagement with the passing time, heavy as one's agenda may actually be. I have enjoyed jogging, over the years, for the reason that it gets the world going at my pace for a short period daily. More recently, choral singing has become my special recreation because a concert, or even a good rehearsal, gives me such a positive and productive sense (and my glitches are swallowed up in the larger euphony).

A long while back, in the seminary, our mentor gave us the Latin adage *Non multa sed multum*—Not a lot of things but a lot of some one thing. My experience in past years has been too often the opposite: *Non multum sed multa*. That puts me among the Marthas to whom Jesus was speaking in his memorable conversation with the sister of contemplative Mary: "Martha, Martha, you are worked up about a lot of things; only one is really essential."

Poor Martha. Puts herself out a hundred percent, and what does she get? A scolding. Much indeed can be said in Martha's defense. Where, for instance, did Jesus and his disciples think lunch was coming from? But it would all be beside the point. While tending,

she was not attending, not centered. Her action did not grow from any contemplative root, any awareness of her being in the presence of and in close bond with the divine. She did not have the right perspective. Do we actually have proof of that? Her anger, her anxiety.

As I try talking further sense to myself on this subject, a few guidelines appear. I assure myself, first of all, that it is not evil to be busy, even superbusy. Needless guilt feelings are no help in sorting out what we can undertake and what we cannot. A pastoral vocation, a human-services calling, seems by its nature to postulate a varied rather than a concentrated life. That is why in the university there is some, often much, inevitable tension between scholarly production and pastoral action. We read of Jesus being surrounded by the crowds and so concerned with responding to these "lost sheep" as barely to have time to eat. But he knew that his exertions were no guarantee of fruitfulness; he was saddened but not unstrung by meager results. And he stayed fully in union with his Father, even if it meant sometimes sneaking away.

REALISM IS REQUIRED

Beginning as we do then with *élan*, a generous impulse, how is it that we end up so often depleted and swamped? The trouble comes, clearly, from some failure to recognize or accept limits. The reluctance to give up something, especially something of one's own devising, or to seem other than omnipotent, will surely bring on overload, the panicky feeling that the central exchange has more calls coming in than one can handle. From overload comes anger and depression, because you cannot accomplish what you would wish, or exhaustion, because you strive doggedly to do so anyway. Meanwhile, some poor, unwitting soul phones in and gets the sharp edge of your voice, without any idea why.

Dialogue takes place continually, I think, between one's physical energies and one's emotions or attitudes. If one has a relish for what one is doing, that supplies tremendous energy; it elicits maximum collaboration from the body. Jesus must have labored thus, looking uniquely to the purpose his Father had proposed to him. He, too, tired out, of course, and had to take his repose. If, on the other hand, a person nurses resentment of some kind, or suffers from excessive self-concern (overdramatizes, perhaps, and I should talk!), this constitutes a drain on the system

before one even begins a task. It is like driving with the brake on.

We, recognizing how much anxiety, irritability, or hypersensitivity will manage to seep in amidst our good will and our most generous impulses, will want to keep clearing the focus and also, as we choose our tasks and projects, to have constant recourse to the great virtue of prudence, without which all other virtues remain stillborn. In doing so we will keep an eye, of course, on Parkinson's Laws, reminders of how readily the "best-laid plans" get prolonged. And, finally, we will want to keep ourselves disposed for the contingency of someone's high distress or for the crucial issue demanding some close study, at which time the rest of the agenda has to go on hold.

"Catching one's breath" is the final large consideration. The phrase says to us, in general, Put some padding between segments of heavy duty. If, for instance, one has a stream of conferees or clients coming in to see one, even a quick smoke between their visits is preferable to not catching one's breath at all. (How religious superiors and other authoritative people, over the generations, have been able to see a stream of subjects without interval or let is beyond my comprehension. No wonder their memories so often failed them about matters discussed.)

The day, too, has to have its time-outs and its adjournments, whether for conversation, or for some exercise, or for television (I suppose I have to say), and for general reading, especially. If one does not replenish, how will one enrich, or even interest, anyone else, to say nothing of carrying the gospel effectively to an outside world where they actually live? The Old Church had its "Hours" and fixed times of prayer. The new one needs, just as much, its privileged moments—"flexible" ones maybe, but not less real. Only in such times taken out of time, really, does the hodgepodge take shape, with assistance from that most useful of all prayers, "Help!"

Finally, one has to plan ahead for the more substantial refresher. "Let's get out of here for awhile" is a strategy that we hear of even in the New Testament. To sum up, the whole self needs reviving periodically, a process that has to center on catching that breath that is God's Spirit.

Does all of this sound utopian? No doubt, but without utopias, without some positive program, no matter how much the poor thing will be infringed on, our chances for getting very far along the road diminish. The world being what it is, of course, a heavy load is likely to be one's lot a good deal of the time. So, please, somebody, keep that warm plate ready.

Who Leaves and Rejoins the Church?

REVEREND CRAIG W. O'NEILL, S.T.D., and KATHLEEN Y. RITTER, Ph.D.

Some people remain Catholic for the course of their lifetime, others leave the active practice of their faith, and some of these join other churches—or even rejoin the Catholic Church at some later date. Various reasons are often given for leaving: rebellion, boredom, disagreement, loss of faith, the church's moral teachings, or the upheaval caused by a changing church.

Take, for example, the case of two individuals both of whom were raised in the same church and in the same community, shepherded by the same pastors, educated by the same nuns, and who lived basically the same life-styles. Yet one discontinues participation in the Catholic Church and the other continues.

This article will attempt to explain this difference first by providing a model for understanding the dynamics that underlie the choice of religious expression and second by applying this model to Catholic leavers and rejoiners. Our model is based largely on the work of Abraham Maslow, James Fowler, Eugene Kennedy, and Victor Heckler. These men have delineated levels of psychological development and levels of spiritual maturity that we suggest are strongly related. In other words, the less developed people are in other areas of life, the less evolved they are likely to be spiritually. Conversely, the more that individuals are able to sustain lifelong friendships, advance successfully in their work, and commit themselves to goals or to another person in a long-term relationship, the more capable they are of a deep level of spirituality. It is our belief that the level of one's spiritual and psychological maturity is a determinant in one's choice to remain Catholic, to leave, or to join another faith.

For some people who grow emotionally, there is a corresponding development of the spiritual. These individuals are able to integrate the religion of their childhood into their personality and to translate it

into a more adult and intrinsic form. Others who develop psychologically in interpersonal, vocational, and intellectual areas are unable to reconcile their earlier religious beliefs with their adult selves. In order to continue evolving personally, and possibly even spiritually, these persons must leave behind the faith and teachings of their childhood. Because they no longer see these as being adequate to explain the complexity of life as they view it, they feel moved toward a different path.

Many individuals remain undeveloped psychologically their entire lives. In saying this we in no way mean to imply that such people are incapable of religious fulfillment. With needs that are less complex, they are, in fact, often more likely than those who are more highly developed to have these needs met in the course of their daily lives and through their faith. Some of the undeveloped remain faithful to the religion of their early life, whereas others leave that particular denomination and never return to it. Still others join another. This article will attempt to provide a framework, based on individual differences in regard to maturity level, for understanding the complexity of religious choice.

HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

The thinking of Maslow can help explain this complexity. He envisioned human needs as existing on a five-tier hierarchy with physical needs on the bottom, followed by needs for safety and security, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Human beings must first meet their physical needs in order to survive. Once people have food, clothing, and shelter, their attention can then be focused on providing for their security. After assuring themselves that they are as physically and emotionally safe as possible, they can begin looking for compan-

ionship and friendship. If needs are reasonably assured in these areas, human energy and resources can then be devoted to personal growth and the development of positive feelings about themselves and their worth. The highest level, that of self-actualization, is referred to as a transcendent state—where one can leave the self behind and attend to broader questions of meaning. Because of their absorption with what Maslow refers to as lower-order needs, few people are able to be sufficiently freed of human concerns to leave the self behind in order to reach the highest level of development.

ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL SCHEMES

Kennedy and Heckler's hierarchy and Fowler's stages of faith are other models for characterizing human beings on a developmental continuum. Like Maslow, they saw some people as being more developed than others. The Kennedy and Heckler categories are labeled maldeveloped, underdeveloped, developing, and developed and correspond with four of Fowler's six stages (mythic-literal, synthetic-conventional, individuated-reflective, and conjunctive faith). The personal characteristics described by these overlapping categories largely define the kind of religious experience a person can achieve and the way in which that conviction is expressed and therefore have bearing on whether or not an individual will remain committed to the Catholic faith.

Maldeveloped/Mythic-Literal. The maldeveloped/mythic-literal (MML) are sometimes plagued by serious psychological problems as evidenced by a long-term history of difficulties and strained smiles that strongly mask underlying hostility, isolation, and negative feelings toward themselves. These people, however, are often not seen as disturbed or angry, because of their skill at intellectualization and their cooperativeness and pleasantness, or because of their ability to detach themselves emotionally from others while remaining cordial. Insofar as they are also detached from themselves and do not handle emotions directly, they tend to rationalize away their negative feelings or project their negative feelings about themselves onto others. They tend to guarantee their place in the world and heaven by placating and conforming to the expectations of others. There is a great reliance on authority, whether it be rooted in law, tradition, scripture, or hierarchy. Faith is manifested by a compulsive and rigid adherence to these structures, and sin is regarded as violating them. If standards are followed, there is the expectation that their present world will be safe and their future salvation assured.

Underdeveloped/Synthetic-Conventional. The underdeveloped/synthetic-conventional (USC), on the other hand, are not as intensely conforming or rigid as the MML but are characterized more by an un-

deruse of their resources. They have an incomplete idea of themselves and their abilities and thus assume identities that are not their own but are conferred by role or by others. This other-directedness and dependency results in the channeling of their energies into maintaining the facades of roles (such as "good wife and mother," "model priest," or "successful businessman"). They lack understanding of their emotions and usually repress or intellectualize negative feelings. Community plays an important role in defining faith for these USC individuals. They are often found among the workers and volunteers of traditional denominations. In contrast with the MML, the interpersonal nature of USC faith response has sin defined, not as breaking rules, but as hurting others. They have a strong need to keep their community stable and intact, which often results in limiting the scope of their world vision.

Developing/Individuated-Reflective. In contrast to the restricted range in which the USC focus their energy, a process of growth and expansion has begun for developing/individuated-reflective (DIR) individuals. They possess vitality, determination, and an emerging sense of purpose. There is a loosening of rigid defenses and a feeling of increased freedom, spontaneity, and openness. This growth process is often begun by a significant change in basic life patterns (e.g., aging parents, illness, work or relationship changes). Developing people have a kinetic element that allows them to move emotionally toward themselves and others.

The faith of the DIR expresses itself differently from the interpersonal-communal response of the USC. It is individualistic in nature with the focus on the believer's conscience, and sin is defined as violating one's integrity. They feel free to loyally question the beliefs of the community, become anti-institutional, or become noninstitutionalized believers marching to their own drummers.

Developed/Conjunctive. Developed/conjunctive (DC) individuals are more in contact with themselves than those in other categories are. They are generally guided by reality and not by fears, and are in touch with their own emotions, needs, and values. Despite problems and sufferings, they struggle to realize a closeness to themselves and others. These people are becoming more capable of balancing independence and dependence in their thoughts, emotions, and actions. Overall, they are interpersonally productive and creative. Their energies are channeled into the tasks of living rather than toward the maintenance of unhealthy defense mechanisms.

In comparison with those who are more at the mercy of their own needs and fears, DC people can "leave" or transcend themselves and unite their being with a larger whole (i.e., God). Thus, faith for these individuals is rooted in a broad world view, one that unifies and reconciles the experiences and

faith expressions of others. Transcending the boundaries of race and creed, the DC are able to recognize and integrate the myths and images found deeply within the life experience of humanity. There is a passion to spend their lives cultivating the possibilities within others and making service a part of who they are. Wrong for them is anything that lessens the global community or the ability of others to achieve their possibilities.

AN OVERLAPPING MODEL

It is our belief that the Kennedy/Heckler categories and Fowler's stages can be closely compared with four of Maslow's five levels of development. (Excluded are Maslow's "physical" level and Fowler's "intuitive-projective" and "universalizing faith" stages.) We are proposing that persons categorized as MML are motivated primarily by their needs for safety and security. Their need to insure safety can help explain much of the shallowness and rigidity of their personality. The threat they perceive to their safety, conversely, can lead to compulsiveness, hostility, placating behaviors, or breakdowns. Need for love and belonging is predominant in the lives of the USC individuals. This emphasis on the appropriateness of their role reflects their fear of not being accepted or loved for who they are. Ironically, their slavishness to the role itself keeps them from getting the love they want.

Their need for self-esteem largely motivates DIR people. By becoming more internally oriented, they are increasingly able to experience and express their feelings and to act accordingly. As they emerge from rigid structures, they are capable of sorting the personally relevant from the irrelevant—even to the point of taking unpopular stands. Developed/conjunctive individuals are developed in many ways. They have interests and ideals beyond themselves, have the ability to be objective about themselves, and possess a philosophy of life that gives meaning to their existence. Because they have taken care of much of their personal business, they are able to realize greater productivity and creativity in their lives. Energy is freed to be channeled into merger with the Divine or into spiritual transcendence.

MEMBERS WHO LEAVE

People leave active practice in the Catholic Church for many reasons, and perception plays a large part in their choice. Among the significant issues are the following five:

1. *Image of God.* Just as with those who choose to remain, one's imagery of God plays an important part in one's decision to leave the Catholic Church. For example, for such maldeveloped/mythic-literal and underdeveloped/synthetic-conventional individuals, God is no longer seen as meeting security

or belonging needs. For many, the absolute assurance of protection for those who play by the rules vanished with Vatican II. God is no longer viewed as unequivocally certain and predictable but rather as compassionate, yet seemingly wishy-washy. They might be heard to say, "What happened to the God who knew what he was doing?"

On the other hand, those who are developing/individuating-reflective and developed/conjunctive often find the God of Catholicism to be casuistic and fear-inspiring. As these individuals evolve, they come to believe that right and wrong often cannot be easily determined. Thus, they can no longer invest their faith in a God who seems naive and simplistic in judgment; nor can they continue to develop personally while believing in the God of the church that promotes such a fear. Blithe references to "God's will," in situations ranging from death to broken dishwashers, conjure up for some an image of a capricious, manipulative, or testing God. Those with a strong desire to be united with the Divine leave in order to find a more life-enhancing deity with whom they can reconcile their imagery. There are other DC individuals who also find the imagery inappropriate. Many women, for example, perceive the almost exclusive masculine representation of God to be foreign and alienating. They simply cannot identify or merge with a deity whose gender assimilates so little of their own nature and history.

2. *Stories of faith.* The way in which the faith is explained also influences a person's decision to leave. For the MML and USC, biblical and anecdotal stories serving to explain the faith may no longer underscore predictability and protection. They seldom hear about the Promises of Fatima, what happened to people who failed to confess the sins on their soul, or other "truths" of this nature. Without these signposts of goodness and guarantees of salvation, they no longer feel supported by the church.

For the DIR and DC, however, the same stories that attract persons at the lower end of the continuum tend to alienate the more evolved. The individual priests with whom they are acquainted or the locales in which they have resided may not have assimilated the liturgical and biblical changes of recent years. Thus, the stories of faith to which they have been exposed fail to correspond with what they consider wise and meaningful. These people trust their intuition to tell them, for example, that unbaptized babies don't go to limbo, that there are worse sins than "sexual impurity," and that one's sins don't increase Christ's pain on the cross. Failing to reconcile these kinds of stories with their inner sense of reality and rightness, they leave.

3. *Practice of religion.* Maldeveloped/mythic-literal and underdeveloped/synthetic-conventional people have often left the church because they have seen their previously strong image of God eroded, the stories of faith diluted, and the accompanying practices and customs of the church collapse. Their

need for a strong moral and liturgical structure have been frustrated by the perceived permissiveness and nonbinding practices of the “renewed” church. They wonder what happened to fish on Friday, standards of clerical dress, and the Latin Mass. The current range of interpretations on such subjects as contraception, divorce and annulments, scripture and tradition, sexuality, and Mass attendance undermines their confidence in the authority of the church. These people need the assurance of well-defined rules that are enforced and customs that are uniformly followed.

Another category of USC are young people who feel alienated from the church. Simultaneously, they often lack an attachment to their parents and to society in general. They have jobs, not careers; they don’t vote or write or visit their parents regularly, or attend Mass. They have been called, among other things, an alienated generation. These individuals are not particularly angry with the church. They essentially haven’t bonded with it. Because they don’t feel a sense of belonging, they simply drift away.

In contrast to these who have never internalized their faith, there exists yet another group of less-evolved, young Catholics. These are single individuals who at one time felt connected to the church but who have likewise drifted away. They do not feel a part of the family orientation of most parishes. Because of their single state, they find it difficult to identify with the church’s focus on the nuclear family (e.g., activities for married couples, parents, and school-age children, and sermons that focus on the “traditional” family). At this stage in their lives, they feel they don’t “belong” to the church.

When the needs of those less evolved for safety and belonging are not validated, their sense of being abused or insulted often leads them to leave the church. Many ex-Catholics in this category can give such examples as the removal of the family-donated statue from the newly renovated sanctuary, the advice of a priest to stay in a destructive marriage or to risk having another baby, the lack of recognition from a pastor or other parishioners, or of not being elected to a church office after having given years of devoted service to the parish.

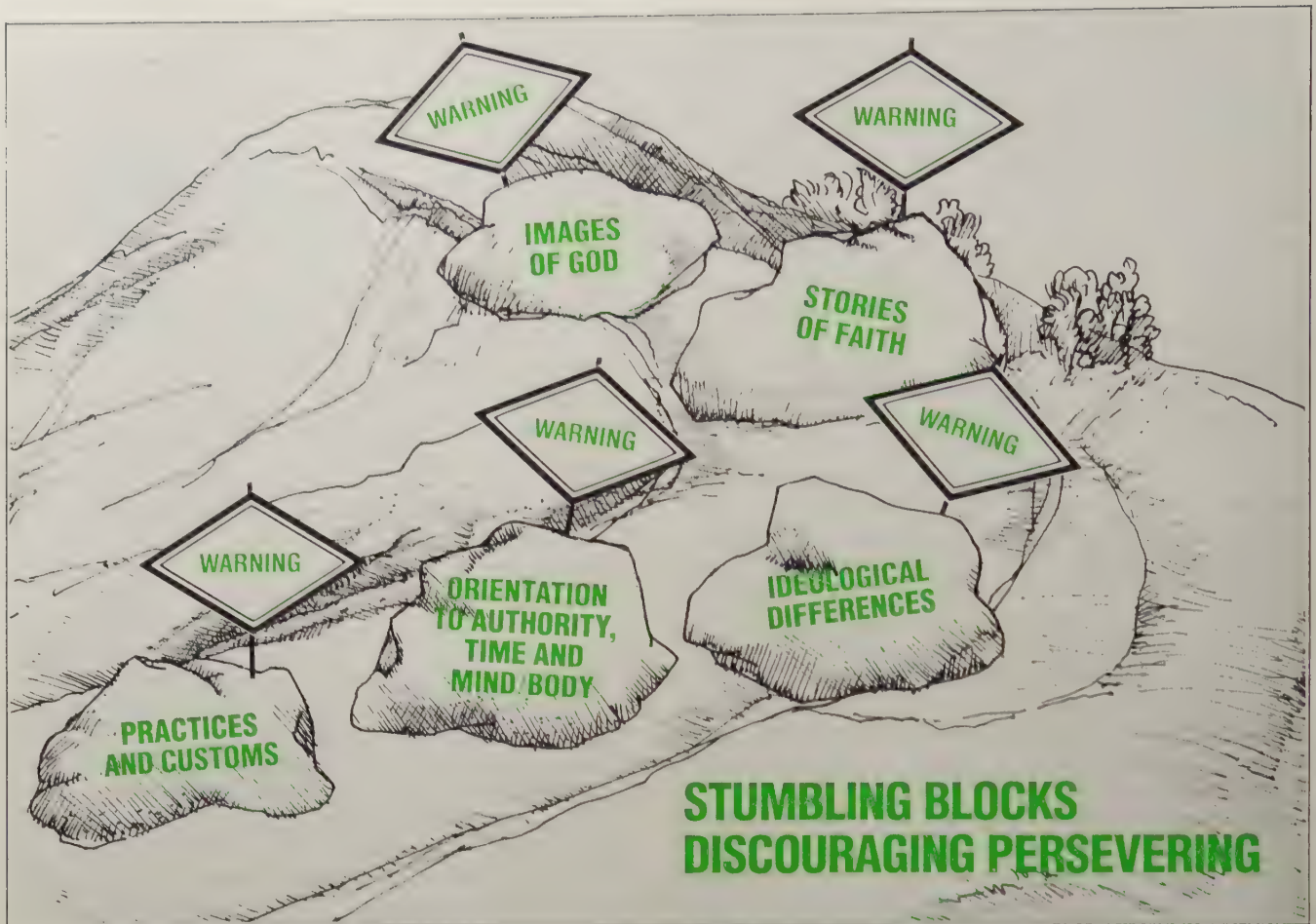
In contrast to the exclusively personal feeling of injustice experienced by those who are less developed, the sense of fairness of the DIR and DC is capable of extending to a broader community. In addition, what the MML and USC see as permissiveness, those who are more evolved may see as rigidity. For example, the church’s practices concerning sexuality and relationships may contribute to persons at all positions on the developmental continuum leaving the church, but the perspectives on these issues differ. The DIR and DC often see the church’s inflexible practices in these areas as being inhumane and destructive to individuals. They can see the anguish and alienation of gay and lesbian people, of the remarried, and of many thoughtful women. Even if the

For many, the absolute assurance of protection for those who play by the rules vanished with Vatican II

pain they feel is not personal, they can empathize with the feelings of the large segments of the Catholic population who fall into these categories.

4. *Reconciliation of ideological differences.* In order to reconcile the natural discrepancies between what they are, feel, believe, and do and those ideals to which they aspire, many MML and USC people feel they must leave the church. To them, it is all or nothing. They feel their life is in contradiction to the principles of their faith, and leaving is the only solution available to them. For example, a sexual lifestyle may leave a person with such a sense of shame that he or she is unable to worship with the “good” people. Likewise, people in remarriages may feel ostracized by the church, and those using contraceptives may feel excluded. “Hedonists” frequently perceive the institutional church as being particularly nonreceptive to them. For all those at the lower end of the developmental continuum, the issues are seen in narrow and clearly defined terms: either they are “in” or they are “out.”

This kind of dichotomous thinking can also manifest itself in rebellion, quiet or otherwise. Lacking an internal sense of rightness, many people leave the church once the threat of an external pressure is removed. This is especially true among youth who grew up in strongly “churched” families and who discontinue religious affiliation upon leaving home. Rebellion can also manifest itself in other ways, however. With the universal applicability of mortal sin shrinking, some people are no longer afraid to leave the church in order to continue the behavior they can’t reconcile with staying in the church. The fear of hell no longer has the holding power it once did.



STUMBLING BLOCKS DISCOURAGING PERSEVERING

For DIR and DC people, the difference between good and evil is not as clearly defined as the less developed believe. At times, they have felt that the messages of the church and the way they were promulgated undermined their intelligence. In fact, certain practices provided an outright assault on their intellect: endless discussions on the proper liturgical head-covering for women, how much love is lust, fasting before communion, the politics of confession, and the paradox of people who don't do it telling those who do it how to do it.

With more education and media input than past generations have had, the more evolved can no longer reconcile the seeming complexity of issues with what they perceive as being the simplistic methods of the magisterial church. Over time, in order to remain in the church, they have had to select out what appeared valid to them and discard what was contradictory. At some point, and for many after considerable struggle, they have come to realize that there is little belief left that identifies them as Catholic. In order to maintain the integrity of their conscience, they choose to leave the church.

Those DIR and DC who leave have often sorted

out issues of church authority versus personal responsibility, patriarchy versus gender equity, trivia versus core faith, a seemingly judgmental image of the church versus a loving image of God, and a church that appears to concentrate on external regulation versus interior transformation. As a result of this filtering process, many people become selective to the point of diminishing returns. Not having enough left with which to identify, they feel compelled to leave.

5. *Orientation differences.* People at different developmental levels vary in their orientation toward time, mind/body dualism, and relationship to authority. In reference to time, those at the lower end of the developmental continuum often place greater emphasis on short-term gratification than people do at the upper ends. The urgency of their needs for safety and belonging forces them into the pleasures of the moment. Staying home in a warm bed on a cold winter morning or joining friends for a lingering brunch often have more appeal than Mass. The need for popularity and being "in" sometimes has people focusing more on fads, fashions, and cars rather than on spiritual matters. A promise of future rewards

can hardly compete with immediate media-induced "highs." Religion calls for an ability to postpone gratification and thus appears dull and ridiculously nonstimulating to those seeking the pleasures and satisfactions of the present. Often, these people find themselves highly oriented to bodily sensations and consequently find the philosophical flavor of Catholicism, with its emphasis on the mental and repression of the physical, antithetical to their life orientation.

Developing/individuating and developed/conjunctive individuals likewise have problems dealing with the church's apparent preoccupation with the future and its exaggerated use of the left side of the human brain. As with less evolved people, they have a need to live more in the present than in the future and in their affective rather than in their cognitive realms. Rather than emphasizing ephemeral pleasures, however, their focus is directed more toward personal integration and interior transformation. The church does not seem to be the vehicle that can enable them to satisfy the depth of these needs. For them, Eastern mysticism, hypnosis, yoga, and Jungian symbolism often provide the spiritual nourishment that they have been seeking. They feel that existence can indeed provide present, deep, and life-enhancing joys, but that the church offers them a passionless and sorrowful view relieved only by the prospect of future beatitude. In contrast with the shallow sensuality of the less evolved, these individuals feel compelled to integrate the physical, sexual, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of their being. For these people, the church has not proven to be either a suitable companion or guide for their life's journey. Thus, they search elsewhere.

Many people at all levels of the developmental continuum are at odds with the church's hierarchical structure. For the MML and USC, unresolved parental issues often surface with regard to church authority, and frequently these differences are transferred onto individual clergy. Apodictic decrees from church officials are met with considerable resistance. Old angers or other feelings emerge, and individuals choose to leave rather than remain and attempt to resolve differences. These behavior patterns are often similar to those they have employed with their own parents, bosses, teachers, or other authority figures. The maldeveloped and underdeveloped nature of the personalities of those at the lower end of the spectrum simply do not contain the flexibility to integrate and resolve discrepancies, whether intrapersonal or interpersonal.

Individuals at the higher end of the developmental continuum are striving for a collegial relationship with authority. The same need to integrate that manifests itself in reference to time orientation and mind/body dualism is also apparent with regard to their relationships with others, with the church, and with God. These people are striving for a blending in their lives on many dimensions. With strong needs

At some point, and for many after considerable struggle, they have come to realize that there is little belief left that identifies them as Catholic

for intimacy, relating, and mutuality, DIR and DC individuals frequently leave the Catholic Church. Despite proclamations to the contrary on the part of officialdom, their experience is one of being "talked down to" and not "communicated with." Their need for companionship on a shared journey is frequently incompatible with what they see as the authoritarian nature of Catholicism. Sensing this chasm, they leave the church in order to find more fulfilling patterns of relationship elsewhere.

SOME HAVE REJOINED

By "rejoiners," we mean those individuals who were baptized into the faith, who have had some degree of exposure to the Catholic experience, and who once discontinued but have since resumed active participation. For most of these, the act of leaving the Catholic Church was not a rejection of God or an act of disbelief, but a personal change in religious stance. Now they have returned, not just to a church, but to the Catholic Church.

It should be kept in mind that the church has also moved toward its people. The reforms of Vatican II have been realized in many parishes and have helped to present a church that focuses more on spiritual growth than on dogma, lay participation and decision making than on clerical domination, and a compassionate image rather than a judgmental one. Among the many reasons that might be presented for a Catholic returning to the faith, we propose the following four:

1. *Family.* Birth of children and entrance into marriage often bring a reevaluation of one's faith.

The arrival of an offspring may propel some maldeveloped/mythic-literal individuals to reconnect with their religion. Their reason for doing so is often based on fear—fear not only for themselves for not having their child baptized, but fear also for the baby's eternal salvation. The underdeveloped/synthetic-conventional see the advent of a child as an opportunity to return to the church in order to enhance their family life. They may be deeply imbued by imagery of the Holy Family or the idealized Christian Family. Developing/individuating-reflective individuals return out of a desire to unify themselves and their newborn child with a life of faith. They sense a need for the help the church can provide in tapping into the richness and strength of God. In this same regard, they often experience a newfound wonder at God's providence in blessing them with a child. This gratitude may move them to renew contact with their own childhood and the faith as it was expressed to them. Their desire to reestablish ties may flow from a dawning realization of their part in a divine plan. This may be the first time they can clearly see themselves as reflecting God's creative capacity. As their personal development continues toward the developed/conjunctive, they more and more come to understand their parental role as being transmitters of a broader heritage and as an integral part of a chain.

Marriage, like the birth of children, can also bring a person back to the church. For MML people, their partner may be a more active Catholic, and thus, they return on that person's coattails or apronstrings. Since fear motivates much of their behavior, they may tag along in order not to be left out. The need to belong "as a couple" often motivates the USC. Organizations like Marriage Encounter are often the avenue for satisfying their belonging needs, the impetus for their reentry into the church, and the catalyst for the future growth of their relationship.

As people and relationships develop, couples come to understand through their experience that there is a source of love beyond themselves that reflects the love they have for each other. Through being a participant in a loving relationship, individuals are better able to assimilate the stories and concepts of a loving God. It is through their union that they learn to merge with God. This merger brings with it a desire to symbolize their relationship within a faith community. The matrimonial symbolism of the Catholic Church serves to satisfy this need and can help attract them back to their faith. Another element drawing them back is the reactivation of their early connection experiences. The emotional learning that has come from their marital union enables them to appreciate in a new way the attachments of their childhood. These gratifying ties compel them to return to the church.

As people reach the highest level of development, their need to give back to humankind becomes a high priority. Through their union with their partners and with others, the love they have experienced at-

Meeting the needs of those at both ends of the continuum is a serious challenge for a society as broad as the Catholic Church

tracts them to the messages of love and generosity of their Catholic heritage. They wish to give back to the God whom they cannot see by giving to those whom they can see. As they are able to tap their own generativity, they become more capable of experiencing that aspect of God. Because loving generativity is, by its very nature, a communal activity, the church is an appropriate arena for its expression.

2. Alienation & connectedness. Other reasons for returning to the church arise from the epidemic sense of alienation felt by many in our society. The MML gravitate back to the church, not so much out of conscious choice as out of habit in order to fill an inner emptiness. Returning to church becomes an antidote for loneliness. In the USC, this inner void expresses itself in a desire to belong. In their search for connectedness, they often return to their religious roots where they once felt they had a place. If the fit is right between their need for belonging and the caring expressed by a priest or parish group, they will actively rejoin. Charismatic prayer groups, marriage support organizations, the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA), and the Newman Apostolate have been particularly effective in this regard.

Since personal growth rarely occurs in a vacuum, DIR people often feel a need for association with those who are also on a spiritual quest. The reasons for which these individuals left are no longer major and preoccupying issues for them. They are now able to identify and approach the inherent spiritual messages of Catholicism that were once clouded by reservations. They may still disagree with the church, but these differences are no longer hindrances to their rejoining. As individuals, they have evolved de-

velopmentally to the point where they now feel free to select the elements of the faith that are personally relevant. This newfound permission allows them to search out and ally themselves with like-minded pilgrims on a shared journey to God.

For the DC, their needs for connectedness and unity are not met by the transitory relationships of this world; they experience an inner emptiness or void. It is through this inner "absence" that they gravitate into an awareness of a realm where souls, united by the awesome presence of God, enter into a mystical communion. There is a peace in this timeless realm, a unification and an integration as one experiences a transcendent goodness. Because they sense their journey toward transcendence cannot be nurtured in a void, they often look to their mystical roots. Since they were raised Catholic and exposed to stories of saints and mystics in childhood, they have some awareness of the transcendent tradition of the Catholic faith. Their lives have evolved to the point where they are now able to bring to fruition the seeds that were planted in their youth. What they now need for their spiritual growth they recall the church as having been able to offer to others. So, they find themselves drawn back for the mentoring available within the church. They are able to focus on the mystical elements of the Mass and sacraments to assist them in their transcendent link with other journeying souls.

3. Source of directedness. For the MML, their behavior, religious and otherwise, is often motivated by their need to avoid negative consequences. The behavior of the DC, on the other hand, is most often an expression of their need to realize wholeness, or a state of optimum positive development. Those at the lower ends of the continuum rely on controls external to themselves, whereas the more developed look deep inside themselves for direction.

The MML may have felt guilty for leaving and dwelling outside the church, and their reasons for returning may include soothing this guilt. Frequently, these people become inordinately active upon returning, almost as if to atone for their leaving in the first place. These are often frightened people, and part of their motivation for returning may be their fear of losing their "immortal souls" if they continue to deviate from the church's laws. Underdeveloped/synthetic-conventional people might feel they have fallen out of God's favor by having left the church. By returning, they can assure themselves that God still loves them and that they continue to be a member of the "flock."

The DIR have reached a point in their evolution where they have sorted through many of their personal difficulties and are ready to turn their attention toward the unresolved issues of their faith. Their rejoining is symbolic of their forgiving the church that they perceive as having proclaimed a distorted image of a loving God. Their willingness to reconcile indicates a healing of the spiritual dimension that they

sense as being so necessary for their continuing growth and self-esteem.

For those at the upper end of the developmental continuum, a deep need to integrate all aspects of their being is their motivating force. This completion implies a coming to terms with the presence of God in their life. As their actualization process takes them closer to the Divine, their intuition tells them that one does not journey into spiritual darkness alone. They have come to know the mysteriousness of their own depths and have been drawn back to the mysteries inherent in the wisdom of the faith. As they have grown beyond the level of human understanding, their longing for holistic completion and transcendence can only be addressed by that which is symbolic and mystical in the church.

4. Tradition. The traditions of Catholicism attract people of all developmental levels. The faith given from childhood is often so deeply ingrained that it becomes an integral part of one's being. Many leave the church in anger, in haste, in confusion, or after deep soul-searching, but the roots of their Catholicism still remain. As time goes on and their inner stirrings become more intense, they have to address this spiritual unrest at their level of developmental need. Thus, the flicker of votive candles in a darkened church, the pungent scent of incense, the colors of the liturgical seasons, the comforting ritual of the Mass, and the sound of familiar hymns draw people back. The strength of this magnetism seems to override the factors that accounted for their leaving in the first place; the nature of the attraction depends on one's developmental level.

While away, the MML have often come to miss the security offered by certain aspects of the religion, such as the authority of the pope and the magisterium, the clarity of the church laws, and the taboos, secrets, and societies of Catholicism. They have yearned for a stability not found in the secular world, and the solidity of the papacy and the presence of the saints serves to reassure them that Tradition will be preserved and moral teachings upheld.

The feelings of familiarity offered in Catholicism lure USC individuals back. For people with an intense need for belonging, the pain of being disconnected from their religious heritage has become too intense. To them, the need to return home transcends any past difficulties or bad memories experienced in the church.

The growing sense of self-esteem experienced by the DIR helps them to see their Catholic heritage anew. The traditions that at one time may have seemed irrelevant or stilted now appear to be welcomed enhancements to their growth as persons. They have begun to explore their spiritual dimensions and have come to realize the benefit of that "magical something" afforded by the sights and sounds of Catholicism.

Many of the DC, in their sojourn from the faith, have missed their heritage. They have come to see

The question is whether the church can tolerate such internal dissent and give its membership permission to loyally disagree

their Catholic identity as being inseparable from their cultural identity. On some level, they view themselves and the church as channels of history and tradition. To them, both are transmitters of a heritage that assures a continuum of events. As these individuals transcend, they wish to renew their involvement with a community that has itself transcended the ages and that will continue into the future. The sights and sounds of their religion help them move beyond the temporal and toward the presence of the Divine, so they selectively reinvolve themselves in the faith of their ancestors.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP

Given the differences in individual developmental levels, there is no universal way of promulgating Christ's values and spirit so as to appeal to all people. Often the very things that attract and satisfy the more developed will drive away the less developed. Meeting the needs of those at both ends of the continuum is a serious challenge for a society as broad as the Catholic Church. As it is, current church thinking and practice frequently cause the maldeveloped/mythic-literal to gravitate toward fundamentalism and the developed/conjunctive toward other expressions of wholeness and mysticism. The challenge facing the church is, first, to understand that there *are* developmental differences within its membership and, second, to recognize that a diversity of "packaging" is necessary in order to allow persons at all stages of growth to assimilate the values and spirit of a loving God. If the official church continues to be intolerant of diverse forms of religious and spiritual expression, it runs the risk of more and

more people feeling that their needs cannot be met within its confines.

There seems to be another problem facing the church. Depending on developmental level, individuals view, judge, and respond to ethical principles differently. Thus, in its desire to teach responsible Christian morality, much dissention has been caused. People are uncertain about the validity of the ideals, the right of the church to teach them, and their own place in the church if they fail to measure up to them. The question is whether the church can tolerate such internal dissent and give its membership permission to loyally disagree.

The other side of this quandary is whether people can give themselves permission to dissent from the church's stated ideals—even if the church doesn't grant them this freedom. The problem for less developed people is that they are too fearful of consequences, too mentally rigid, and too mistrustful of their conscience to dissent and still remain. Unlike more developed stayers and rejoiners, what they don't consider possible is staying and selecting out for themselves the healthy, spiritual elements of the Catholic faith.

Our final implication seems to speak more to individuals than to the church. Whether people remain, leave, or return, they usually experience a variety of resolved and unresolved emotions regarding the institution. It is our hope that this model can help provide the perspective necessary for them to separate the human organization from its spiritual message. With this objectivity, people can be freed to pursue their attraction to the faith without being encumbered by old hurts and present inequities and disagreements. If our model can give people an understanding of the dynamics involved in the human response to the religious experience, they may be able to reconcile some of their inner confusion and fragmentation. This could move individuals to forgive the church for its human weakness, and at the same time provide the healing that will enable them to pursue their spiritual journeys in whatever manner they need for their personal growth.

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MISSING THE MEANING OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Hermeneutic of Suspicion Is an Enticing Trap

WILLIAM A. BARRY, S.J., Ph.D.

In Freudian circles, much earlier in this century, there was apparently such a tendency to interpret everything in sexual terms that only jokes could puncture the balloon. Thus, at least occasionally, someone had to say that a cigar was also just a cigar, and that a smokestack was also necessary to carry off smoke and soot. Similarly, what in scriptural studies has been called the "hermeneutic of suspicion"—nothing is what it seems to be—colors much of an educated modern person's approach to life. "Is my smoking oral gratification?" "Have I entered this profession because of an unconscious need for power?" "Have I fallen in love with this woman because she reminds me of my mother?"

On another front, Scripture studies have made some ministers wary of saying anything positive about a Bible text; often, preachers are heard to say, "Scholars doubt that this event ever really happened, but. . . ." This tendency to be suspicious and wary of every experience also affects our pastoral care, and perhaps nowhere more pervasively than in our attitudes toward religious experience, or as John E. Smith puts it, in *Experience and God*, toward "the religious dimension of experience." While I believe that a hermeneutic of suspicion can be healthy, I will also contend that it needs to be kept in its proper place if pastoral care is to do its central task of enabling people to meet the living God.

AUTHOR'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

In different cultures I have had experiences that brought to light the effects of the hermeneutic of suspicion on pastoral care. I will describe these ex-

periences and then draw some theoretical and practical consequences from them.

Once, I was leading a workshop on spiritual direction for about twenty-five Jesuit priests. They had been asked to read two chapters of *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* before the workshop. These chapters stressed the centrality of religious experience for the work of spiritual direction. I opened the first session with a talk on religious experience and the importance of letting a person describe his or her experience at some length. I then did a role play with one of the men, a man whom I had directed on a retreat. In the role of director I had little to do except, by nods and grunts, to encourage him to keep talking. It quickly became apparent to me that he was describing, in a thinly disguised way, an actual experience which he had had on the retreat. At the end of about ten minutes we stopped the role play and asked the audience for reactions. Every response indicated suspicion of the experience. They wanted to know about his relationship with his parents. They speculated on unconscious motivation leading to the experience. They wanted to know how one could tell if it was really religious. Not one of these priests showed a sense of wonder or interest about what the Lord might be doing in this man's life. Needless to say, these reactions taught us all a great deal about how much we had to overcome to become effective spiritual directors.

On another occasion, I was asked to be the keynote speaker for a three-day workshop for ministers, priests, rabbis, and other pastoral workers. The workshop was organized by the pastoral care department of a large teaching hospital and drew about

Some who immediately want to know how to detect delusion or illusion may be motivated, at least in part, by a fear of getting in over their heads

five hundred participants. I was to give three talks on spiritual direction as the core form of pastoral counseling, and I volunteered to do a role play after the second talk in lieu of a panel discussion. The first talk was on the religious dimension of experience and its relationship to ministry, the second on spiritual direction. In these two talks I stressed the need to use all our listening and helping skills to enable people to talk about their experiences of God, and I indicated that many ministering people find it difficult to do this. Then came the role play.

I asked the audience to be my spiritual director as I described to them an experience of God. I would answer any question they put to me in the role as best as I could. In order to be able to do this I had to portray someone with a similar background. So I told them that I was a Jesuit priest, forty-two years old, who had taught in a high school for the last ten years. I described some of my background and my satisfaction with my work and living situation. I told them that I had a very close friendship with a woman co-worker for the past two years and had had some emotional turmoil earlier in the year when she met and fell in love with another man. I then gave them a short description of a religious experience I had during my annual retreat at the end of the last school year. At the end of this description I opened myself for questions. Practically all the questions were about the relationship with the woman, some of them rather judgmental and presumptuous. After about fifteen minutes of fielding such questions, I said, "No one seems interested in my religious experience." Someone asked me to give more details about it and I did. But even as I was describing the experience in more detail, there were hands in the air wanting

to go back to an analysis of my relationship with my co-worker.

The final example occurred at a six-day workshop on spiritual direction in Brazil for about thirty priests and nuns, most of whom were Brazilian and all of whom had been specially picked for the workshop. We had spent one whole day on training in listening and helping skills, emphasizing the need to listen empathically and without judgment, especially in the beginning of spiritual direction. On the second day I talked about the centrality of helping a person to describe religious experience. During that talk I underlined the necessity of such detailed description before one begins to ask whether the experience is of God or not. At the end of the talk and question period Philomena Sheerin, who was translating into Portuguese, did a role play, asking the participants to act as spiritual directors.

She, too, played the role of someone like herself, a missionary from Ireland, but one who was suffering burnout and had returned to Ireland for a sabbatical. She was feeling the loss of a very close friend and at a distance from God. One day in winter she was walking on a beach feeling low, as dark and gloomy as the day. She asked God to make his presence felt, to show her his love. As she walked along, in her mind's eye she saw a snow-covered field. As she looked more closely, she saw spring flowers beginning to push their way through the snow. She felt her gloom lift and a great gratitude to God, which she expressed in prayer. The gloom did not return.

When she finished the role play, the first response from the audience was a psychological analysis that explained the image as wish fulfillment. This led others in the group to affirm the religious nature of the image. No one asked Philomena to describe the experience at more length. The whole discussion was about validity.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE SLIGHTED

My reactions during and after the various role plays just described gave me some insight into what people must feel when their hope of talking to a minister about a religious experience proves fruitless. During the discussion after the first incident I got more and more concerned that the directee's experience was being discounted and even explained away. While in the role play I had been captivated by the description of the experience and happy that we were starting the workshop with an account of what seemed to me an encounter with God. In the discussion, I felt that the directee had opened himself up to a group that seemed to have little respect for his experience. Fortunately, he had come to trust his own experience.

I had similar reactions during the role play in Brazil, but they were heightened by my memories of what had happened to me at the teaching hospital. At the hospital, I was taken aback by the intensity of

the desire of the participants to analyze the relationship with my co-worker. I had to improvise a great deal because I had not thought much about that part of the role play. I felt intruded on and even badgered and got angry that no one seemed to be the least bit interested in the religious experience. I was also amused at times by how far off the mark the questioning was. For a few days afterward I would periodically remember the scene, feeling the mike around my neck and reliving a sense of having been under siege.

It is not unlikely that in real life, people who are similarly treated when they want to talk about religious experiences or experiences about which they are unsure will have many of the same reactions. They may also have other reactions that are far more pernicious with respect to their religious lives. Most people are chary of talking about religious experience or experiences that they think might be religious. They might be afraid of being considered odd or pious or proud. They may indeed wonder whether they are odd or a bit crazy. Under these circumstances it can be rather devastating to meet a religious minister who seems more interested in discovering the psychological dynamics behind a "re-

ligious experience" than in helping the person to describe and savor the experience first. And it could mean the end of developing a conscious relationship with God. Since every human being is ambivalent about God, there may even be a sigh of relief that one's "religious experience" can be discounted as a psychological trick. But there is the other side of the ambivalence to be considered; a longing for intimacy with God may be stifled, leaving the person also feeling a bit empty and sad. Perhaps, too, another of God's initiatives is thwarted.

I do not believe that these examples are isolated incidents attributable to the role-play atmosphere or to the nervousness of a large group. I know from my own experience and from supervising others that the hermeneutic of suspicion sits deep within most of us who do pastoral work and has dynamic roots that I hope to explore.

SUSPICION BLOCKS DISCOVERY

If it can be plausibly argued that every human experience can have a religious dimension (see "The Religious Dimension of Experience," in *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*, Summer 1986)—because of the nature

THE EFFECT OF THE HERMENEUTIC OF SUSPICION

You say you had a religious experience. Now, are you an adult child of an alcoholic parent? Were you molested as a child? More important, how did you come out on the Myers-Briggs and Enneagram?



The discernment question begins not with wholesale suspicion, but with the attitude of trying to discover the finger of God

of God and of the human—then one can make a case that the deepest purpose of all of Christian ministry is to enable the discovery of that religious dimension. In other words, Christian ministry aims at helping others to become conscious or more conscious of the presence of God in their lives and to develop their relationship with God. But where is God met? Only in human experience. Thus, the Christian minister has to help people to pay attention to their experience, to be on the lookout, as it were, for what Peter Berger has called the “rumor of angels.” The hermeneutic of suspicion, however, tends to abort the process of discovery before it can even get started.

Just as a person will only explore potentially painful or intimate internal experiences with a counselor, therapist, or friend who is felt to be “on his or her side,” so too, I believe, a person will only explore the religious dimension of experience, that most intimate area of life, with someone who seems interested in paying attention to the experience. I may have my own doubts about whether an experience is of God or not, but I will not talk about something as deeply personal and precious with you if I sense that you are suspicious from the start.

Gerard Egan’s stage theory about helping persons can assist us here. In the first stage of a helping relationship, the helper establishes a climate where experience can be described by being accurately empathetic, genuine, respectful, and concrete. Clients are enabled to explore their experience and behavior and describe it because they feel that the helper is interested and really understands what they are experiencing or have experienced. In the beginning there is little analysis or confrontation or evaluation of the experience. These come later, after the

experience itself has been rather thoroughly remembered and described. I maintain that the ministering person needs to be the same kind of skilled helper when dealing with or looking for the religious dimension of experience. Before discernment (i.e., analysis and evaluation) there must be adequate remembering and description.

ROOTS OF ATTITUDE

But the hermeneutic of suspicion gets in the way of the development of the atmosphere needed for the first stage. There’s the rub. Perhaps if we explore some of the sources of that hermeneutic we can help ourselves to overcome its pernicious effects and use it positively.

One early question heard frequently at any discussion of religious experience is, “How do you know it’s a religious experience?” Fair enough as a question, but rather premature as the first reaction to a discussion of religious experience. Some ministering people may react this way because they recall times when someone cornered them with a story of a revelation of God that seemed manifestly crazy or at least deluded. The invitation to be more open to the possibility of a religious dimension to every experience may seem like opening Pandora’s box. People with obsessive religious thoughts are hard to shake, as many of us know. But shall we close our hearts and minds to the religious experiences of the great majority of people who are not obsessive, because we do not know how to handle graciously and firmly the few who are? We would be doing ministry in the church a great service if we learned such a skill and let ourselves be more open to the religious dimension of experience.

Some who immediately want to know how to detect delusion or illusion may be motivated, at least in part, by a fear of getting in over their heads. Many of us who minister may immediately associate “religious experience” with high-flown mystical prayer and feel inadequate and even afraid to touch it. After all, most of us are not mystics. It is, perhaps, one of the tragedies of ministerial training that what little was said about prayer or the spiritual life concentrated on the esoteric, the “mystical,” rather than on the experience of ordinary folk like the ministerial students themselves. In such courses on the “spiritual life,” emphasis was often placed on being wary and suspicious. So those of us who took such courses had a hermeneutic of suspicion inculcated in us early, even before we began any ministry. In addition, we may have come to equate “religious experience” with the mystical or even the frankly bizarre. Focusing on the concept of the religious dimension of every experience and listening to some examples of ordinary prayer may alleviate some of the anxiety and help relegate the hermeneutic of suspicion to its proper place in our ministry.

A related dynamic may also be at work. Many of

us who have had ministerial training may actually have learned much more about psychological theories of development and about behavioral dynamics than about prayer and the development of the relationship with God. So we feel more comfortable with psychological analysis and indeed feel that we have more to offer from this knowledge base. Hence, we approach discussion of religious experience with such a knowledge bias. Moreover, in our Western culture, we have imbibed the spirit, if not the training, of psychological analysis at every turn in our education. As noted earlier, such analysis feeds the hermeneutic of suspicion. Nothing is what it seems to be. We may feel more comfortable and even more helpful pointing out the possibilities of delusion than inviting a person to describe in more detail his or her "religious experience."

I have also noted a tendency among many who are learning how to be counselors or spiritual directors to feel that they were only doing good work when they were analyzing and challenging. The development of the listening skills called for by skilled practitioners like Egan in the first stage of a helping relationship comes hard to people with such a mentality. Yet often enough "just" listening with empathy and genuineness enables the other to do whatever analysis or problem solving is necessary without any further intervention by the helper.

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES POSSIBLE

Perhaps we can obviate some of the bad effects of an overestimation of psychology by elaborating on the import of our focus on the religious dimension of experience. Any human experience can be looked at from different perspectives. There is, for example, a physiological, a biological, a sociological, and a psychological dimension to every human experience. In other words, every experience involves bodily functions and psychological and sociological influences. For those of us who are believers there is also a religious dimension; that is, any experience can be or become a disclosure of God. But even as a disclosure of God, such an experience also has psychological, physiological, and other dimensions. In *My God: A Reappraisal of Normal Religious Experience*, Martin Thornton makes the point with a creative image.

A rose, then, is by selection and interpretation, something different to different people. To the botanist it is *Rosaceae arvensis*, to the gardener it is an Ena Harkness, to the esthete a beautiful sight, and to the blind man it is a wonderful smell. None of these have experienced the rose in its totality, but when Temple's religious man says that it is a creature of God which may disclose his presence, his interpretation is no less valid.

Any experience of God will be conditioned by our psychological dynamics. But that fact does not in and of itself invalidate the experience as religious.

If it did, then no experience of God would be possible. All that it points to is that it is a human being with a history who encounters God.

Of course, the fact that biological, psychological, and sociological dynamics condition every experience of God does make discernment necessary. What is of God in this experience? What is not of God? But notice the differences. We must first have an experience and savor it and describe it, at least to ourselves, before we can ask the discernment question. Second, the discernment question begins not with wholesale suspicion, but with the attitude of trying to discover the finger of God. The hermeneutic of suspicion has been put in its proper place. Indeed, if we begin with the assumption that any experience can have a religious dimension, can be a disclosure of God, then the a priori attitude is not one of automatic suspicion, but one of openness to discovery of the signs of God. The hermeneutic of suspicion keeps us from mindless credulity, a not insignificant task, but still ancillary to the major one (at least for those of us who minister) of enabling the discovery of God, or perhaps more exactly, of setting up the conditions where such discovery is made easier.

Here we come to the major obstacle to putting the hermeneutic of suspicion in its proper place. Every one of us who does ministry is attracted by the mystery we call God, to use a phrase beloved by Karl Rahner. But like every other human being we are also frightened, if not terrified, of that same mystery. Strangely enough, we put up all kinds of resistance to meeting God, even when our experiences of God are very positive. Yet ministry, almost by definition, puts us in the way of experiencing God. Hence the strength of the hermeneutic of suspicion. It is the perfect bulwark with which to protect ourselves in ministry from the experience of God. Moreover, we can even pride ourselves on not being naive or tender-minded, which religious workers often feel or are made to feel in our modern world. I am convinced from my own experience of resistance and from that of others that intimacy with God is felt as very threatening to our egos and our very selves. God has been trying since time immemorial, it seems, to convince us otherwise, but we still find it hard to believe. The hermeneutic of suspicion stands us in good stead to keep us sealed off from God. Unfortunately, it also thwarts more effective ministry.

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EDUCATING INTEGRATED PERSONS

Jesuit Founder Stressed Formation, Not Just Information

WILKIE AU, S.J., Ph.D.

The history of Western civilization illustrates a perennial problem and challenge to human development: how to value reason and emotion simultaneously and how to develop these important aspects of the human personality in a unified and harmonious fashion. Throughout the ages, the swing of the academic pendulum between the extremes of rationalism and romanticism testifies to the difficulty of this challenge as well as to the propensity to resolve the tension by favoring one aspect to the detriment of the other. This resolution has consistently proven to be inadequate and short-lived because it creates an artificial opposition between the rational and the affective in the human being and easily leads to a dichotomy between mind and heart. Human wholeness requires a process of development that integrates the rational and the emotive, the cognitive and the affective, in living and learning. Any education purporting to develop the whole person must therefore simultaneously promote, in a balanced

way, both rational training and emotional development. In a word, education for wholeness must be education for formation, not just for information.

The notion of education as formation contains several related philosophical assumptions: that education is more than transmission of knowledge or development of the mind; that education must go beyond processing information, to include the formation of character and values, meaning and purpose; and that education is about living, not merely about how to earn a living. In short, education that seeks to foster full human growth must exceed academic excellence.

Ignatius of Loyola, as delineated in Robert R. Rusk's *The Doctrines of the Great Educators*, clearly envisioned education as an integrated process of personality formation. The pristine vision of Ignatian education sought to develop whole persons, integrated personalities. In the words of Jesuit historian Hugo Rahner, in *Ignatius the Theologian*, "A Chris-

tian, in the full sense of what Ignatius was aiming at . . . is one who has overcome the pernicious schizophrenia between soul and body, brain and heart, and thus become fully integrated. . . ." Inspired by this Ignatian vision, Father Pedro Arrupe, the predecessor of the present Jesuit General, challenged educators to go "beyond academic excellence" and to meet the real needs of students who "are searching for meaning for their lives . . . and questing for the sources of life beyond academic excellence."

In this article, I would like to highlight the vision of Ignatius and some of the specific qualities he sought in an education dedicated to the formation of whole and integrated persons. Briefly, I will touch on two major points: first, the Ignatian concern for the simultaneous development of wisdom, moral integrity, and service to others. This concern shaped his triple educational aim of nurturing growth in intellectual, moral, and social maturity. Second, I will examine the Ignatian concern for the harmonious integration of rationality and affectivity in living and learning. I want to show how this concern for integration is reflected in four ways in Ignatius's thought:

1. in the kind of knowledge Ignatius valued highly
2. in the guidelines for decision making he included in his *Spiritual Exercises*
3. in the norm of action he proposed for his followers in the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*
4. in his ideal of persons who are "contemplatives even in action"

SINGLE INTEGRATED AIM

For St. Ignatius, the integral human being is both virtuous and wise. He or she is someone who is at once knowledgeable and dedicated to working for the betterment of others. Thus, he urged Jesuit educators to encourage students to seek their integral development by pursuing not learning (*eruditio*) alone, or good morals (*probitas*) alone, but both truth and a morally upright life; to seek not knowledge alone, or holiness alone, but both knowledge and goodness. Furthermore, to avoid a humanism that smacked either of narcissism or self-absorption, a third aspect was clearly coupled with learning and moral integrity, that of duty or service to others (*officium*). The spirit of Ignatian spirituality in general requires that virtuous action include service to others out of love. In the concrete circumstances of life, this means a serious concern for interpersonal relationships and social responsibilities. Consequently, for Ignatius, learning and moral rectitude were to be manifested in altruistic action. *Eruditio*, *probitas*, and *officium* formed the single integrated aim of Ignatian education.

It is clear that although intellectual development was highly esteemed by Ignatius and the early Jesuits, there was also a distinctively instrumental estimate of its worth. The value placed on cognitive or rational

training was certainly real, but it was instrumental rather than ultimate. Commenting on the primacy placed on moral education by Jesuit tradition, educational philosopher John Donohue, in *Jesuit Education*, makes the following clarification:

To award the ethical aim primacy does not, of course, mean depreciating, much less eliminating the education of intelligence but only means that this academic goal is not considered ultimate in every order and under every aspect nor an aim to be achieved apart from or independent of the moral and social development of the individual.

THINKING FUSED WITH FEELING

In the integrated personality, reason and emotion, sense and imagination, desire and duty, all function in a way that allows the individual to retain a unified sense of self. Ignatius's concern for the integration of thinking and feeling both in the act of knowing and in the process of decision making shows up in several key aspects of his thought: first, in the notion of *sentir*, or felt knowledge; second, in the guidelines for decision making described in the *Spiritual Exercises*; third, in the notion of *discreta caritas*, or "discreet charity," as a norm of action suggested in the Jesuit *Constitutions*; and fourth, in the Ignatian ideal of a contemplative in action.

For Ignatius, as John Futrell has pointed out, in "Ignatian Discernment" (*Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, April 1970), knowledge was not just an intellectual grasping of abstract propositions but "a total human experience of understanding with all its emotional resonance." Hence, the knowledge sought is not a cold, dispassionate grasp of facts, but "above all a kind of 'felt knowledge,' an affective, intuitive knowledge possessed through the reaction of human feelings to exterior and interior experience." *Sentir*, or felt knowledge, then, is the result of an integrating mode of knowing, for it flows from a fusion of thinking and feeling in an act of cognition.

Ignatius's high valuation of *sentir* is important for us to look at today. It challenges us to reassert the value and validity of feeling, sensing, and believing as forms of knowing in an age when knowledge is so frequently reduced to thought. As Elliot Eisner explains, in *Facts and Feelings in the Classroom*, "cognition has come to mean linguistically mediated thought" despite the fact that it "originally referred to that process through which the organism becomes aware of its environment."

A personal example here might well illustrate Eisner's point. Often, when I make an error while playing volleyball, a friend teasingly yells out to me, "Hey, what do you hear from your head?" This casual comment can be seen as reflecting the fallacy of reducing all useful and worthwhile knowledge to thought, or "head knowledge." Whereas if Fritz Perls, the founder of Gestalt Therapy, were at the

Education is about living, not merely about how to earn a living

sidelines, he instead would probably yell out, "You've got to go out of your mind to come to your senses!" Gestalt Therapy argues that too often the computer mind traps people in the realm of abstractions, making them unaware of what is going on in the "here and now." Literally, they are caught up in "non-sense."

In *Crisis in the Classroom*, a book concerned with "the remaking of American education," Charles Silberman underscores the vital need for reintegrating thinking, feeling, and sensing in education. "What tomorrow needs," he believes, "is not masses of intellectuals, but masses of educated [persons]—[persons] educated to feel and act as well as to think." Silberman states:

The current tendency to celebrate the unthinking marrowbone is as dangerous as the exaltation of the antiseptic mind, and as mistaken. The insistence that systematic and disciplined intellectual effort is a waste of time—the worship of uninhibited sensation and feeling—at its best is sentimental foolishness.

More important, both this view and its opposite, the emphasis on disembodied intellect, represent badly mistaken conceptions of the nature of mind, which encompasses feeling no less than intellect, and intellect no less than feeling. The ancient Hebrews understood this well; the Biblical verb *yadah*, "to know," signifies a unification of intellect, feeling, and action.

GUIDANCE FOR DECIDING

Ignatius's concern for integrating thought and feeling is also reflected in his guidelines for decision making. One of the major purposes of the *Spiritual Exercises* is to facilitate the process of personal de-

cision making, especially in regard to one's state of life or vocation. In view of this purpose, Ignatius includes within the text instructions concerning times and methods that would contribute to a sound and prayerful decision or "election," as he terms it. The central concern underlying Ignatius's recommendations about when and how a person should go about reaching his or her decision is that personal choice be made in the context of one's religious experience. His instructions, consequently, are intended to maximize a person's sensitivity and openness to the influence of God throughout the decision-making process. Hence, to alert the person to God's influence, he describes three "times" or ways in which God can manifest his guidance and assistance to the person faced with choice.

The "first time," in Ignatius's words, is when God "so moves and attracts the will that a devout soul without hesitation, or the possibility of hesitation, follows what has been manifested to it." Phenomenologically, this first time can be viewed as a moment of peak religious experience when a person is overwhelmed by an inner sense of absolute certainty as to what his or her decision should be. Here, Ignatius cites the example of St. Paul's and St. Matthew's response to Christ's call. It is an experience in which one perceives such a total congruence between one's sense of internal need and one's understanding of God's will that the course to be followed is unquestionably clear. Quite apart from and unrelated to any deliberation, this personal "moment of truth" can spring suddenly upon the person, without any antecedent cause. This forceful flash of insight removes any further need for deciding.

The "second time" of decision making suggested by Ignatius occurs when a person must rely on his affective states of consolation or desolation to detect the influence of God regarding the decision to be made. (Consolation is the complexus of positive feelings that encourages, supports, and confirms a prospective decision as being "right"; desolation is the complexus of negative feelings that discourages, questions, calls into doubt a prospective decision, suggesting it is not "right.") The assumption underlying this second time of election is that one's feelings and emotions can be indicators and conveyors of God's guidance. In a substantial way, it affirms the knowledge-bearing capacity of feelings.

The "third time" of decision making involves an individual in the process of reasoning. While picturing oneself on one's death bed and recalling one's purpose for existing (i.e., to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save one's soul), the person is asked to list the pros and cons of various options. This third instance presupposes that a person can detect the presence and influence of God through the process of reasoning.

As Michael J. Buckley has indicated, in *The Way* (Supplement No. 20, 1973), the genius of Ignatius was not that he counted transpersonal influences,

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or the attractions of affectivity, or the process of intellection as critical factors in securing the guidance of God within the context of religious experience; others also shared this inclusive view. Unique and underivative, however, was Ignatius's explanation of the dynamics of these three, often interrelating, factors within a person's religious experience. In Buckley's words,

What Ignatius provided was a structure within which each of these finds a significant place; none is dismissed out of hand. A co-ordination among them is established so that they reach an integrity of effect, and one is taught how to recognize and reply to each.

FEELINGS CAN CONFIRM

The phrase "integrity of effect" aptly describes the desired outcome of Ignatian decision making. Presuming the person is genuinely committed to discovering and doing the will of God and is free from any inordinate attachment that would destroy his or her freedom, the decision made is integral if it emanates from an integration of interior feelings and thoughts. Ignatius sought this integration by building into the second and third times of decision making a complementary dynamic. It is obvious that an in-

tegration of thought and feeling is being sought when he directs the person who has made a decision based on the rational approach of the third time to seek affective confirmation by prayerfully attending to his feelings as suggested by the second period of election. In other words, after making a decision, the person should stay in close touch with the feelings that arise as a result of that decision and determine whether they confirm the rightness of that choice or cast doubt on it. Over a period of time of testing, if positive feelings (peace, joy, hope, confidence, etc.) dominate, then affectivity joins with intelligence to produce an "integrity of effect." If negative and disturbing feelings (doubt, fear, anxiety, discouragement, etc.) are experienced, then a closure would seem premature and the person should continue the process until an "integrity of effect" is produced through the harmonious integration of one's thoughts and feelings.

Conversely, a decision made in the second time should also be confirmed through a method of the third time. William Peters, in *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Exposition and Interpretation*, points to this when he cites the evidence contained in the *Directory of 1599*, in which Juan de Polanco, a close friend of Ignatius, called the second time of election "more excellent" than the third but adds that it might

A heart able to understand how to discern is the essence of discreet charity

be wise to check the result of an election made in this time by one of the methods of the third.

Hence, it seems clear that the second time of decision making, based on affectivity, and the third time, based on reasoning, were designed by Ignatius to function in a complementary dynamic. According to John Futrell, the Ignatian process involves paying attention simultaneously to "the continuity of thoughts during reflection, the concomitant feelings constantly reacting to these thoughts—feelings that confirm or call into question the orientation of the reflection—and the growing understanding that involves both the thoughts and feelings—felt knowledge."

WHOLE ORGANISM CONSULTED

Ignatius's approach is an early form of what today is called holistic decision making, which encourages individuals making a decision to rely not only on their minds but also on the data that come from feelings, senses, bodily sensations, and the imagination. Psychologist James Simkin recounts a case that illustrates this holistic approach. Once when working with a man struggling to decide whether to remain in a business venture he had recently begun with a friend, Simkin asked the client to imagine staying with his original commitment and remaining with the business. As the client tried to imagine as vividly and concretely as he could what this option would entail, Simkin directed him to pay attention to his bodily sensations. When entertaining the option of staying with his business commitment, the client experienced his stomach tying up in knots. Then

Simkin directed the client to fantasize other alternatives. As the patient did so, he discovered that his stomach began to unravel and relax. The therapist then asked the patient to shuttle between the two different fantasies, while simultaneously paying attention to his bodily reactions. As the patient did so, he began to discover a recurrent pattern: whenever he imagined staying with the business venture, his body filled with stress; whenever he imagined abandoning the business deal, his body began to relax.

This case cited by Simkin demonstrates the usefulness and relevance of the data produced by the imagination, senses, bodily sensations, and feelings in the process of decision making. This holistic approach is supported by Carl Rogers's strong conviction, expressed in *On Becoming A Person*, that "my total organismic sensing of a situation is more trustworthy than my intellect." Testifying to this "wisdom of the organism," Rogers further states:

As I gradually come to trust my total reactions more deeply, I find that I can use them to guide my thinking. . . . I think of it as trusting the totality of my experience, which I have learned to suspect is wiser than my intellect. It is fallible I am sure, but I believe it to be less fallible than my conscious mind alone.

IGNATIAN ACTION NORM

In writing the *Constitutions*, Ignatius realized that law can only comment on the generality of situations and that the individual person on the scene must often be left to determine what exactly should be done in concrete situations. In these cases, he suggests that "discreet charity" be the norm of action for Jesuits. This concept also reflects Ignatius's concern for the integration of thinking, feeling, and action. Various translations as "an educated or intelligent heart" or "loving intelligence," this Ignatian standard is rooted in both intellect and will, along with feelings. In Scholastic philosophy, "discretion" is seen as the wise use of the properly chosen means to an end; prudence is the wise choice of means. As such, discretion is a function of the mind. Charity, or love, on the other hand, is a function of the heart, involving will and feelings. When told by God in a dream that he could have anything he wanted, Solomon asked for "a heart to understand how to discern between good and evil" (I Kgs 3:9). A heart able to understand how to discern is the essence of discreet charity.

It is significant that for Ignatius, an adequate norm of action must integrate both discretion and love. Although love should always be the motive of actions, in and of itself love provides no clear course of action. The existential question always remains: What does love require in this concrete situation? Thus, reason must come into play. Since *discreet love* is mentioned seven times in the *Constitutions*, it is clear that Ignatius wanted his followers to be people whose

actions were not determined by reason alone, or by feeling alone, but by an intelligent heart and a compassionate mind.

CONTEMPLATIVE IN ACTION

A final illustration of Ignatius's integrated personality can be seen in his description of a person who is contemplative while in action. In modern times, this ideal of a "contemplative in action" challenges us to integrate the capacity to wonder, to marvel, to perceive in depth with the capacity to be inspired and moved to altruistic action. In the final exercise of the Spiritual Exercises, "The Contemplation for Obtaining Divine Love," Ignatius illustrates the three-fold dynamic or movement that characterizes the contemplative in action.

The first movement is a cognitive one, a way of viewing reality with a wonder that leads to worship, with a recognition that, in the words of the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, "the world is charged with the grandeur of God . . . shining forth like shroud of gold." This kind of perception naturally leads to awe, which for Abraham Heschel is "a sense for the transcendence, for the reference everywhere to Him who is beyond all things." In *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism*, he writes:

Awe enables us to perceive in the world intimations of the divine, to sense in small things the beginning of infinite significance, to sense the ultimate in the common and the simple; to feel in the rush of the passing the stillness of the eternal.

The second movement is an affective one, feelings stirred up by one's perceptions. We experience feelings of indebtedness, gratitude, and love when we recognize the loving gratuity of God giving himself to us in all of creation.

The last movement is one of altruistic action—love, motivated by gratitude, reaching out to others. Thus, if education is to produce modern-day contemplatives in action, it must produce people capable of perceiving with sensitivity and depth; capable of being moved deeply by their perceptions; and finally, capable of gratuitous and committed action on behalf of others.

Writing in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (March 26, 1986), David Nyberg, professor of phi-

losophy of education at the State University of New York, Buffalo, provides a contemporary argument for the Ignatian vision of education as integrated development. He laments the decline of intellectual curiosity, the fact that "people who want to understand the world for the hell of it" are studying in "career centers that now occupy what used to be liberal arts colleges." Even in those colleges that are less career oriented, liberal education, according to Nyberg, is often too narrowly "seen as the development of the mind, restricted to the acquisition of knowledge, and reduced to learning true propositions." Critical of this excessively and one-sidedly cerebral orientation to education, he states his argument in strong terms:

That ungenerous philosophy leaves out education for wonder, irony, and daring to think otherwise, which are essential ingredients for affective and conscientious participation in the world. We modern educators must take pains not to lose sight of the fact that there is more to "mind" than knowledge, and more to "person" than mind.

Clearly, Nyberg's criticism cannot be applied to the Ignatian vision of education, which sought to develop persons who were at once knowledgeable, compassionate, and committed to action on behalf of others. By encouraging the integration of learning and virtue, thinking and feeling, contemplation and action, Ignatius sought to bring about an education that would be truly formative of individuals who have "overcome the pernicious schizophrenia between soul and body, brain and heart, and thus become fully integrated."

RECOMMENDED READING

- Buckley, M. "Rules for the Discernment of Spirits." *The Way*, Suppl 20: *Apostolic Spirituality and Reform II* (Autumn 1973):19-37.
- Futrell, J. "Ignatian Discernment." *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 2 (April 1970).
- Rubin, L., ed. *Facts and Feelings in the Classroom: Views on the Role of the Emotions in Successful Learning*. New York: Viking Press, 1974.
- Rusk, R. *The Doctrines of the Great Educators*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969.
- Simkin, J. "The Introduction to Gestalt Therapy." *Live Classroom: Innovation Through Confluent Education and Gestalt*, Edited by George Brown. New York: Viking Press, 1975.

BOOK REVIEWS

A Healthy Life: Exercise, Behavior, Nutrition, by Frederick R. Drews, P.E.D., et al. Indianapolis: Benchmark Press, 1986. 267 pp. \$18.95.

Wellness, Spirituality and Sports, by Thomas Ryan. New York: Paulist Press, 1986. 215 pp. \$8.95.

Frederick R. Drews, a colonel in the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps, is joined by two other medical corps colleagues in presenting a book "for the intelligent American adult who wants to stay healthy and fit by following a system that is practical, scientifically sound, motivational, satisfying, and habit forming."

Basing the book on many years of professional experience in developing a comprehensive health and fitness program for the senior officer corps of the Army, the authors have adapted the manuscript so that it is suitable for people in all types of occupations and (although there are no separate chapters or entries in the index) for both men and women.

After introductory chapters on the integrated approach that the book advocates and on motivation, about a third of the book describes aerobic exercise and strength-training programs. Each is broken down into small measurable steps and is accompanied by illustrative sketches. The subjects are seriously treated, but this is no Paris Island Marine boot camp; "The pursuit of physical fitness should be a pleasant and invigorating experience rather than a daily athletic competition against others or yourself."

The center of the book contains a chapter on Type A behavior and health and is based on the program that Meyer Friedman, M.D., original descriptor of the Type A personality, and James J. Gill, S.J., M.D., editor-in-chief of this journal, developed for the U.S. Army. The characteristics of Type A behavior are set forth along with listings of the goals and methods used in behavior modification. But readers who wish to go seriously into this kind of program for them-

selves will want to supplement the book with others such as Herbert Benson's *The Relaxation Response* and *Beyond the Relaxation Response* (both available in inexpensive paper editions).

A final section of the book concentrates on nutrition and particularly on weight, fat, and risk of heart disease. There are sensible warnings against fad diets, and detailed lists of energy-burning exercises and calorie counts of food, along with practical hints such as "when you park at a mall or at work, choose the true executive parking spot, the one farthest from the door."

The book is erudite enough in its citations, bibliographies, and index to satisfy the most obsessive Type A person. They, and all of us, can benefit from its contents.

Wellness, Spirituality and Sports is an upbeat, enthusiastic contribution by Thomas Ryan, a Paulist priest, director of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism in Montreal. Father Ryan joins in the effort to connect care of spirit with care of body so as to enhance the growth of a human being who can respond with intelligence, vitality, and eagerness to both the gifts and challenges of life.

The first four chapters survey the "wellness revolution," attempt to sketch out a spirituality for it, correlate it with the more traditional concept of leisure, and move on to a more "leisurely, holistic approach to sports." The final four chapters apply the theory to four individual activities—running, swimming, skiing, and dancing.

Father Ryan is acute in identifying two great hungers in North American life: the hunger for physical fitness and the hunger for meaning in life. Many of us who have some dealings with the young (or young in heart) and athletically active are struck by the good will and curiosity of many of them toward spiritual realities of which they are not explicitly aware. The book will be helpful to them and to those who deal with them; in the old phrase, it "goes in their door." The author's vitality and contagious enthusiasm will warm all but the most churlish among us.

—Jon J. O'Brien, S.J., D.O.

Writing for Human Development

The principal intention of our Editorial Staff and Board in publishing HUMAN DEVELOPMENT is to be of help to people involved in the work of fostering the growth of others. This growth, which is as important for the well-being of society as it is for that of individuals, cannot be achieved apart from beneficial interaction between persons; nor can it be accomplished without the grace of the Creator who wants us all to live our lives as maturely as possible, and who is glorified by our doing so. The articles we publish are written to contribute to the promotion of such constructive interaction among persons, and between them and God.

The intellectual, emotional, spiritual, moral, physical, sexual, and cultural aspects of human development are all of deep concern to us. It is our hope that writers who desire to contribute to the ministry this journal represents will feel encouraged to deal with any of these areas of growth, keeping in mind the fact that our readers include church leaders, pastoral ministers, educators, religious superiors, spiritual directors, athletic coaches, religious formation personnel, campus ministers, missionaries, people performing healing ministries, parents, women and men engaged in lay ministry, and other people of various religious denominations who have in their care persons of all ages whom they want to help develop to the fullest degree of maturity, happiness, and human effectiveness.

We want the articles we publish to be of interest to as many of these readers as possible. We want the content of the articles to shed theoretical light on the various aspects of human development; we also desire to provide as many how-to articles as we can, in which the authors describe for our readers what they have learned from both their successful and their unsuccessful attempts to nourish the growth of others. We are especially interested in presenting articles that discuss the ways that development-related issues and problems are handled and ministries are performed in diverse cultural settings around the world. We want to receive reviews of books and films; reports on research, workshops, symposia, and courses; interviews; and letters to our editor.

In brief, we publish HUMAN DEVELOPMENT so that people wishing to become fully alive and to help others do the same can benefit from the knowledge and experience of writers at home in the fields of psychology, medicine, psychiatry, sociology, spirituality, organizational development, etc., who realize the importance of sharing their expertise with appreciative readers in 140 different countries, and who are generous enough to take the time to put their ideas on paper so that human beings can become what we are created to be: persons being made whole in the image and likeness of God.

Linda D. Amadeo, R.N., M.S.
Executive Editor

Book-of-the-Year Announcement

Religious life, like marriage, both glorifies God and enriches the world by serving as a challenge to the women and men choosing that state of life to develop themselves to the fulness of maturity. Their serious and perennial pursuit of personal growth, in the context of their religious community and the church, provides an example of life well lived, from which others, especially the young, can profitably learn. The more transparently their aims and efforts in ministry are revealed, and the more clearly their inspirations and tactics in collaborating with the Creator are disclosed, the greater is the probability that their strivings will be understood, supported, and imitated by others who are thus enabled to appreciate and admire them.

Since Vatican II, the changes in the ways religious persons work, pray, reside, dress, and play have puzzled and confused not only many among the Catholic laity and non-Catholics but even a great number of the older members of religious communities. Especially nebulous has been the evolution in the meaning of the traditional vows of obedience, poverty, and celibacy or chastity. The world has urgently needed the help of articulate women and men religious who are able to explain "from the inside" (as clearly as anyone can *explain* a mystery) how the Holy Spirit is reshaping their communities, ministries, and hearts.

Consequently, we are indebted to Sister Sandra M. Schneiders, a member of the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Monroe, Michigan, for providing in her book *New Wineskins* a fresh and brilliant synthesis of the theological, psychological, and historical foundations of contemporary religious life. With the lived experience of religious persons, rather than theoretical or legal formulations, as her starting point, Dr. Schneiders presents a discussion of the role of women religious as liberators of the op-

pressed, a theory of religious life and profession, an analysis of permanent commitment, an updating of the theology of religious vows, an examination of the role of friendship and love in the lives of consecrated celibates, an exploration of the changing nature and function of community life, and a clarification of how obedient persons can assume the stance of dissent. *New Wineskins* is so scholarly, absorbing, and convincing, and so timely and intelligible as well, that the editors of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT have selected it for special recognition as winner of our Book-of-the-Year Award.

Dr. Schneiders is associate professor of New Testament and Christian Spirituality at the Jesuit School of Theology, and a member of the doctoral faculty at the Graduate Theological Union, in Berkeley, California. *New Wineskins* is published by Paulist Press (997 Macarthur Boulevard, Mahwah, New Jersey, 07430). In saluting the author, we also want to show appreciation of the collaborative aspect of the book's genesis. Dr. Schneiders insists in the introduction that the "credit for whatever of value it contains belongs to many groups and individuals with whom I have had the privilege of discussing my reflections on religious life over the past two decades." For her earnest pursuit of such cooperation, which has enhanced the richness and credibility of *New Wineskins*, we are deeply grateful to Dr. Schneiders, just as we are to all who contributed to her preparation of this unmatched contribution to contemporary religious and developmental literature.



James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.
Editor-in-Chief